

of blood and darkness by Xlpver

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Summary:

BOOK THREE

To save his mother's life, Eddie must travel to the City of Glass, the ancestral home of the Shadowhunters - never mind that entering the city without permission is against the Law, and breaking the Law could mean death. To make things worse, he learns that Richie does not want him there, and Stan has been thrown in prison by the Shadowhunters, who are deeply suspicious of a vampire who can withstand sunlight.

As Eddie uncovers more about his family's past, he finds an ally in

mysterious Shadowhunter Henry. With Pennywise mustering the full force of his power to destroy all Shadowhunters forever, their only chance to defeat him is to fight alongside their eternal enemies. But can Downworlders and Shadowhunters put aside their hatred to work together? While Richie realizes exactly how much he's willing to risk for Eddie, can Eddie harness his newfound powers to help save the Glass City - whatever the cost?

1. There Will Be Blood

Notes for the Chapter:

bitches im back!!!!!! lmao. i can't believe this is the third one already. You might need to know this is going to be the last one, it's been an amazing ride you guys!!!! Hope you enjoy 7w7

The cold snap of the previous week was over; the sun was shining brightly as Eddie hurried across Jim's dusty front yard. The weather might have warmed up, but the wind off the East River could still be brutal. It carried with it a faint chemical smell, mixed with the Brooklyn smell of asphalt, gasoline, and burned sugar from the abandoned factory down the street.

Stan was waiting for him on the front porch, sprawled in a broken-sprung armchair. He had his phone balanced on his blue-jeaned knees and was poking away at it industriously with his fingers. "Score," he said as Eddie came up the steps. "I'm kicking butt at Clash Royale."

Eddie pushed his hood back, shaking hair out of his forehead, and rummaged in his pocket for his keys. "Where have you been? I've been calling you all morning."

Stan got to his feet, shoving the blinking rectangle into his messenger bag. "I was at Belch's. Band practice."

Eddie stopped jiggling the key in the lock—it always stuck—long enough to frown at him. "*Band* practice? You mean you're still—"

"In the band? Why wouldn't I be?" He reached around Eddie. "Here, let me do it."

Eddie stood still while Stan expertly twisted the key with just the right amount of pressure, making the stubborn old lock spring open. His hand brushed Eddie's; his skin was cool, the temperature of the air outside. Eddie shivered a little. He still felt confused whenever he saw Stan.

“Thanks.” Eddie took the key back without looking at him.

It was hot in the living room. Eddie hung his jacket up on the peg inside the front hall and headed to the spare bedroom, Stan trailing in his wake. Eddie frowned. His suitcase was open like a clamshell on the bed, his clothes and sketchbooks strewn everywhere.

“I thought you were just going to be in Derry a couple of days,” Stan said, taking in the mess with a look of faint dismay.

“I am, but I can’t figure out what to pack. What if I can’t wear jeans there?”

“Why wouldn’t you be able to wear jeans there? It’s another country, not another century.”

“But the Shadowhunters are so old-fashioned, and Bill always wears elegant clothes—” Eddie broke off and sighed. “It’s nothing. I’m just projecting all my anxiety about my mom onto my wardrobe. Let’s talk about something else. How was practice? Still no band name?”

“It was fine.” Stan hopped onto the desk, legs dangling over the side. “We’re considering a new motto. Something ironic, like ‘We’ve seen a million faces and rocked about eighty percent of them.’”

“Have you told Belch and the rest of them that—”

“That I’m a vampire? No. It isn’t the sort of thing you just drop into casual conversation.”

“Maybe not, but they’re your *friends*. They should know. And besides, they’ll just think it makes you more of a rock god, like that vampire Lester.”

“Lestat,” Stan said. “That would be the vampire Lestat. And he’s fictional. Anyway, I don’t see you running to tell all your friends that you’re a Shadowhunter.”

“What friends? You’re my friend.” Eddie threw himself down onto the bed and looked up at Stan. “And I told you, didn’t I?”

“Because you had no choice.” Stan put his head to the side, studying

him; the bedside light reflected off his eyes, turning them silver. "Now my two best friends are leaving me." He said in a faked sadness tone, then laughed.

"Have you talked to Bev?" Eddie asked. "I tried calling her a few hours ago but it goes always to voicemail."

Stan nodded. "Yup. She's fine, she says she's going to be back probably next week."

Eddie sighed. "Well, hopefully when she gets back, I'll have good news to tell her."

"I'll miss you while you're gone."

"I'll miss you, too," Eddie said, although his skin was prickling all over with a nervous anticipation that made it hard to concentrate. *I'm going to Derry! his mind sang. I'll see the Shadowhunter home country, the City of Glass. I'll save my mother.*

And I'll be with Richie.

Stan's eyes flashed as if he could hear Eddie's thoughts, but his voice was soft. "Tell me again—why do *you* have to go to Derry? Why can't Rena and Jim take care of this without you?"

"My mom got the spell that put her in this state from a warlock—Kali Prasad. Rena says we need to track her down if we want to know how to reverse the spell. But she doesn't know Rena. She knew my mom, and Rena thinks Kali will trust me because I look so much like her. And Jim can't come with me. He could come to Derry, but apparently he can't get into Alicante without permission from the Clave, and they won't give it. And don't say anything about it to him, please—he's really not happy about not going with me. If he hadn't known Rena before, I don't think he'd let me go at all."

"But the Denbroughs will be there too. And Richie. They'll be helping you. I mean, Richie did say he'd help you, didn't he? He doesn't mind you coming along?"

"Sure, he'll help me," Eddie said. "And of course he doesn't mind. He's fine with it."

But that, Eddie knew, was a lie.

Eddie had gone straight to the Insitute after he'd talked to Rena at the hospital. Richie had been the first one he'd told his mother's secret to, before even Jim. And he'd stood there and stared at Eddie, getting paler and paler as he spoke, as if he weren't so much telling him how he could save hismother as draining the blood out of him with cruel slowness.

"You're not going," he said as soon as Eddie had finished. "If I have to tie you up and sit on you until this insane whim of yours passes, you are not going to Derry."

Eddie felt as if Richie had slapped him. He had thought he'd be pleased. He'd run all the way from the hospital to the Institute to tell him, and here Richie was standing in the entryway glaring at Eddie with a look of grim death. "But you're going."

"Yes, we're going. We *have* to go. The Clave's called every active Clave member who can be spared back to Derry for a massive Council meeting. They're going to vote on what to do about Pennywise, and since we're the last people who've seen him—"

Eddie brushed this aside. "So if you're going, why can't I go with you?"

The straightforwardness of the question seemed to make him even angrier. "Because it isn't safe for you there."

"Oh, and it's so safe here? I've nearly been killed a dozen times in the past month, and every time it's been right here in New York."

"That's because Pennywise's been concentrating on the two Mortal Instruments that were here." Richie spoke through gritted teeth. "He's going to shift his focus to Derry now, we all know it—"

"We're hardly as certain of anything as all that," said Sharon Denbrough. She had been standing in the shadow of the corridor doorway, unseen by either of them; she moved forward now, into the harsh entryway lights. They illuminated the lines of exhaustion that

seemed to draw her face down. Her husband, Zack Denbrough, had been injured by demon poison during the battle last week and had needed constant nursing since; Eddie could only imagine how tired she must be. "And the Clave wants to meet Edward. You know that, Richie."

"The Clave can screw itself."

"Richie," Sharon said, sounding genuinely parental for a change. "Language."

"The Clave wants a lot of things," Richie amended. "It shouldn't necessarily get them all."

Sharon shot him a look, as if she knew exactly what he was talking about and didn't appreciate it. "The Clave is often right, Richie. It's not unreasonable for them to want to talk to Eddie, after what he's been through. What he could tell them—"

"I'll tell them whatever they want to know," Richie said.

Sharon sighed and turned her blue eyes on Eddie. "So you want to go to Derry, I take it?"

"Just for a few days. I won't be any trouble," Eddie said, gazing entreatingly past Richie's white-hot glare at Sharon. "I swear."

"The question isn't whether you'll be any trouble; the question is whether you'll be willing to meet with the Clave while you're there. They want to talk to you. If you say no, I doubt we can get the authorization to bring you with us."

"No—," Richie began.

"I'll meet with the Clave," Eddie interrupted, though the thought sent a ripple of cold down his spine. The only emissary of the Clave he'd known so far was the Inquisitor, who hadn't exactly been pleasant to be around.

Sharon rubbed at her temples with her fingertips. "Then it's settled." She didn't sound settled, though; she sounded as tense and fragile as an overtightened violin string. "Richie, show Eddie out and then

come see me in the library. I need to talk to you.” She disappeared back into the shadows without even a word of farewell.

Eddie stared after her, feeling as if he’d just been drenched with ice water. Bill seemed genuinely fond of his mother, and Eddie was sure Sharon wasn’t a bad person, really, but she wasn’t exactly *warm*.

Richie’s mouth was a hard line. “Now look what you’ve done.”

“I need to go to Derry, even if you can’t understand why,” Eddie said. “I need to do this for my mother.”

“Sharon trusts the Clave too much,” said Richie. He reached out and stabbed at the elevator button with his index finger. “She has to believe they’re perfect, but they aren’t.”

Eddie crossed his arms over his chest. “Is that really why you don’t want me to come? Because it isn’t safe?”

A flicker of surprise crossed his face. “What do you mean? Why else wouldn’t I want you to come?”

Eddie swallowed. “Because—” *Because you told me you don’t have feelings for me anymore, and you see, that’s very awkward, because I still have them for you. And I bet you know it.*

The elevator arrived with a clatter. Pushing the gate aside, Eddie stepped into it and turned to face Richie. “I’m not going because you’ll be there. I’m going because I want to help my mother. I have to help her. Don’t you get it? If I don’t do this, she might never wake up. You could at least pretend you care a little bit.”

Richie put his hands on Eddie’s shoulders, his fingertips brushing the bare skin at the edge of Eddie’s collar, sending pointless, helpless shivers through his nerves. There were shadows below his eyes, Eddie noticed without wanting to, and dark hollows under his cheekbones. The black sweater he was wearing only made his bruise-marked skin stand out more, and the dark lashes, too; he was a study in contrasts, something to be painted in shades of black, white, and gray, with splashes of gold here and there, like his eyes, for an accent color—“Let me do it.” His voice was soft, urgent. “I can help her for you.

Tell me where to go, who to ask. I'll get what you need."

"Rena told the warlock I'd be the one coming. She'll be expecting Sonia's son, and you look *nothing* like my mom."

Richie's hands tightened on his shoulders. "So tell her there was a change of plans. I'll be going, not you. *Not you.*"

"Richie—"

"I'll do whatever," he said. "Whatever you want, if you promise to stay here."

"I can't."

Richie let go of him, as if he'd pushed him away. "Why not?"

"Because," Eddie said, "she's my mother, Richie." He shook his head. "You wouldn't understand—"

"Maybe I don't." His voice was cold.

"I wasn't—"

He slammed the gate shut between them. For a moment Eddie stared at him through it—the mesh of the gate divided up his face into a series of diamond shapes, outlined in metal. A single golden eye stared at him through one diamond, furious anger flickering in its depths.

"Richie—," he began. But with a jerk and a clatter, the elevator was already moving, carrying Eddie down into the dark silence of the cathedral.

"Earth to Eddie." Stan waved his hands at him. "You awake?"

"Yeah, sorry." Eddie sat up, shaking his head to clear it of cobwebs. That had been the last time he'd seen Richie. He hadn't picked up the phone when Eddie had called him afterward, so he'd made all his plans to travel to Derry with the Denbroughs using Bill as reluctant

and embarrassed point person. Poor Bill, stuck between Richie and his mother, always trying to do the right thing. “Did you say something?”

“Just that I think Jim is back,” Stan said, and jumped off the desk just as the bedroom door opened. “And he is.”

“Hey, Stan.” Jim sounded calm, maybe a little tired—he was wearing a battered denim jacket, a flannel shirt, and old cords tucked into boots that looked like they’d seen their best days ten years ago. His glasses were pushed up into his brown hair, which seemed flecked with more gray now than Eddie remembered. There was a square package under his arm, tied with a length of green ribbon. He held it out to Eddie. “I got you something for your trip.”

“You didn’t have to do that!” Eddie protested. “You’ve done so much....” Eddie thought of the clothes he’d bought him after everything he owned had been destroyed. Jim had given him a new phone, new art supplies, without ever having to be asked. Almost everything he owned now was a gift from Jim. *And you don’t even approve of the fact that I’m going.* That last thought hung unspoken between them.

“I know. But I saw it, and I thought of you.” He handed over the box.

The object inside was swathed in layers of tissue paper. Eddie tore through it, his hand seizing on something soft as kitten’s fur. He gave a little gasp. It was a bottle-green velvet coat, old-fashioned, with a gold silk lining, brass buttons, and a wide hood. He drew it onto his lap, smoothing his hands lovingly down the soft material. “It looks like something the Denbroughs would wear,” he exclaimed. “Like a Shadowhunter traveling cloak.”

“Exactly. Now you’ll be dressed more like one of them,” Jim said. “When you’re in Derry.”

Eddie looked up at him. “Do you want me to look like one of them?”

“Eddie, you *are* one of them.” His smile was tinged with sadness. “Besides, you know how they treat outsiders. Anything you can do to fit in ...”

Stan made an odd noise, and Eddie looked guiltily at him—he'd almost forgotten Stan was there. He was looking studiously at his watch. "I should go."

"But you just got here!" Eddie protested. "I thought we could hang out, watch a movie or something—"

"You need to pack." Stan smiled, bright as sunshine after rain. Eddie could almost believe there was nothing bothering him. "I'll come by later to say good-bye before you go."

"Oh, come on," Eddie protested. "Stay—"

"I can't." His tone was final. "I'm meeting Mike."

"Oh. Great," Eddie said. Mike, he told himself, was nice. He was smart. He was attractive. He was also a werewolf. A werewolf with a crush on Beverly. And who's, apparently, Stan's new close friend. But maybe that was as it should be. Maybe his new friend should be a Downworlder. After all, Stan was a Downworlder himself now. Technically, he shouldn't even be spending time with Shadowhunters like Eddie. "I guess you'd better go, then."

"I guess I'd better." Stan's dark eyes were unreadable. This was new—he'd always been able to read Stan before. Eddie wondered if it was a side effect of the vampirism, or something else entirely. "Good-bye," he said, and bent as if to kiss Eddie on the cheek. Then he paused and drew back, his expression uncertain. Eddie frowned in surprise, but he was already gone, brushing past Jim in the doorway. He heard the front door bang in the distance.

"He's acting so *weird*," Eddie exclaimed, hugging the velvet coat against himself for reassurance. "Do you think it's the whole vampire thing?"

"Probably not." Jim looked faintly amused. "Becoming a Downworlder doesn't change the way you feel about things. Or people. Give him time. You did break up with him."

"We never dated."

"Because you weren't in love with him. That's an iffy proposition,

and I think he's handling it with grace. A lot of teenage boys would sulk, or lurk around under your window with a boom box."

"No one has a boom box anymore. That was the eighties." Eddie scrambled off the bed, pulling the coat on. He buttoned it up to the neck, luxuriating in the soft feel of the velvet. "I just want Stan to go back to normal." He glanced at himself in the mirror and was pleasantly surprised—the green made his hair stand out and brightened the color of his eyes. He turned to Jim. "What do you think?"

He was leaning in the doorway with his hands in his pockets; a shadow passed over his face as he looked at Eddie. "Your mother had a coat just like that when she was your age," was all he said.

Eddie clutched the cuffs of the coat, digging his fingers into the soft pile. The mention of his mother, mixed with the sadness in his expression, was making Eddie want to cry. "We're going to see her later today, right?" he asked. "I want to say good-bye before I go, and tell her—tell her what I'm doing. That she's going to be okay."

Jim nodded. "We'll visit the hospital later today. And, Eddie?"

"What?" Eddie almost didn't want to look at him, but to his relief, when he did, the sadness was gone from Jim's eyes.

He smiled. "Normal isn't all it's cracked up to be."

Stan glanced down at the paper in his hand and then at the cathedral, his eyes slitted against the afternoon sun. The Institute rose up against the high blue sky, a slab of granite windowed with pointed arches and surrounded by a high stone wall. Gargoyle faces leered down from its cornices, as if daring him to approach the front door. It didn't look anything like it had the first time he had ever seen it, disguised as a run-down ruin, but then glamours didn't work on Downworlders.

You don't belong here. The words were harsh, sharp as acid; Stan wasn't sure if it was the gargoyle speaking or the voice in his own

mind. *This is a church, and you are damned.*

“Shut up,” he muttered halfheartedly. “Besides, I don’t care about churches. I’m Jewish.”

There was a filigreed iron gate set into the stone wall. Stan put his hand to the latch, half-expecting his skin to sear with pain, but nothing happened. Apparently the gate itself wasn’t particularly holy. He pushed it open and was halfway up the cracked stonework path to the front door when he heard voices—several of them, and familiar—nearby.

Or maybe not that nearby. He had nearly forgotten how much his hearing, like his sight, had sharpened since he’d been Turned. It sounded as if the voices were just over his shoulder, but as he followed a narrow path around the side of the Institute, he saw that the people were standing quite a distance away, at the far end of the grounds. The grass grew wild here, half-covering the branching paths that led among what had probably once been neatly arranged rosebushes. There was even a stone bench, webbed with green weeds; this had been a real church once, before the Shadowhunters had taken it over.

He saw Eleven first, leaning against a mossy stone wall. It was hard to miss Eleven—she was wearing a splash-painted white T-shirt over rainbow leather shorts. She stood out like a hothouse orchid, surrounded by the black-clad Shadowhunters: Bill, looking pale and uncomfortable; Ben, looking around everyone as if he desperately wanted to get out of there, standing beside a little boy who had to be Georgie, the youngest. Nearby was their mother, looking like a taller, bonier version of Bill, the same long auburn hair. Beside her was a woman Stan didn’t know. At first Stan thought she was old, since her hair was nearly white, but then she turned to speak to Sharon and he saw that she probably wasn’t more than thirty-five or forty.

And then there was Richie, standing off at a little distance, as if he didn’t quite belong. He was all in Shadowhunter black like the others. When Stan wore all black, he looked like he was on his way to a funeral, but Richie just looked tough and dangerous. Stan felt his shoulders tighten and wondered if anything—time, or forgetfulness—would ever dilute his resentment of Richie. He didn’t want to feel it,

but there it was, a stone weighting down his unbeating heart.

Something seemed odd about the gathering—but then Richie turned toward him, as if sensing he was there, and Stan saw, even from this distance, the thin white scar on his throat, just above his collar. The resentment in his chest faded into something else. Richie dropped a small nod in his direction. “I’ll be right back,” he said to Sharon, in the sort of voice Stan would never have used with his own mother. He sounded like an adult talking to another adult.

Sharon indicated her permission with a distracted wave. “I don’t see why it’s taking so long,” she was saying to Eleven. “Is that normal?”

“What’s not normal is the discount I’m giving you.” Eleven tapped the heel of her boot against the wall. “Normally I charge twice this much.”

“It’s only a *temporary* Portal. It just has to get us to Derry. And then I expect you to close it back up again. That is our agreement.” She turned to the woman at her side. “And you’ll remain here to witness that she does it, Rena?”

Rena. So this was Sonia’s friend. There was no time to stare, though—Richie already had Stan by the arm and was dragging him around the side of the church, out of view of the others. It was even more weedy and overgrown back here, the path snaked with ropes of undergrowth. Richie pushed Stan behind a large oak tree and let go of him, darting his eyes around as if to make sure they hadn’t been followed. “It’s okay. We can talk here.”

It was quieter back here certainly, the rush of traffic from York Avenue muffled behind the bulk of the Institute.

“You’re the one who asked me here,” Stan pointed out. “I got your message stuck to my window when I woke up this morning. Don’t you ever use the phone like normal people?”

“Not if I can avoid it, vampire,” said Richie. He was studying Stan thoughtfully, as if he were reading the pages of a book. Mingled in his expression were two conflicting emotions: a faint amazement and what looked to Stan like disappointment. “So it’s still true. You can

walk in the sunlight. Even midday sun doesn't burn you."

"Yes," Stan said. "But you knew that—you were there." He didn't have to elaborate on what "there" meant; he could see in the other boy's face that he remembered the river, the back of the truck, the sun rising over the water, Eddie crying out. He remembered it just as well as Stan did.

"I thought perhaps it might have worn off," Richie said, but he didn't sound as if he meant it.

"If I feel the urge to burst into flames, I'll let you know." Stan never had much patience with Richie. "Look, did you ask me to come all the way uptown just so you could stare at me like I was something in a petri dish? Next time I'll send you a photo."

"And I'll frame it and put it on my nightstand," said Richie, but he didn't sound as if his heart were in the sarcasm. "Look, I asked you here for a reason. Much as I hate to admit it, vampire, we have something in common."

"Totally awesome hair?" Stan suggested, but his heart wasn't really in it either. Something about the look on Richie's face was making him increasingly uneasy.

"Eddie," Richie said.

Stan was caught off guard. "Eddie?"

"Eddie," Richie said again. "You know: short, black hair, bad temper."

"I don't see how Eddie is something we have in common," Stan said, although he did. Nevertheless, this wasn't a conversation he particularly wanted to have with Richie now, or, in fact, ever. Wasn't there some sort of manly code that precluded discussions like this—discussions about feelings?

Apparently not. "We both care about him," Richie stated, giving him a measured look. "He's important to both of us. Right?"

"You're asking me if I *care* about him?" "Caring" seemed like a pretty

insufficient word for it. He wondered if Richie was making fun of him—which seemed unusually cruel, even for Richie. Had Richie brought him over here just to mock him because it hadn't worked out romantically between Eddie and himself? Though Stan still had hope, at least a little, that things might change, that Richie and Eddie would start to grow apart, to not be—

He met Richie's gaze and felt that little hope shrivel. It was obvious Richie hadn't brought him over here to mock him for his feelings; the misery Stan knew must be plainly written across his own features was mirrored in Richie's eyes.

"Don't think I like asking you these questions," Richie snapped. "I need to know what you'd do for Eddie. Would you lie for him?"

"Lie about what? What's going on, anyway?" Stan realized what it was that had bothered him about the tableau of Shadowhunters in the garden. "Wait a second," he said. "You're leaving for Derry right now? Eddie thinks you're going tonight."

"I know," Richie said. "And I need you to tell the others that Eddie sent you here to say he isn't coming. Tell them he doesn't want to go to Derry anymore." There was an edge to his voice—something Stan barely recognized, or perhaps it was simply so strange coming from Richie that he couldn't process it. Richie was *pleading* with him. "They'll believe you. They know how ... how close you two are."

Stan shook his head. "I can't believe you. You act like you want me to do something for Eddie, but actually you just want me to do something for *you*." He started to turn away. "No deal."

Richie caught his arm, spinning him back around. "This is for Eddie. I'm trying to protect him. I thought you'd be at least a little interested in helping me do that."

Stan looked pointedly at Richie's hand where it clamped his upper arm. "How can I protect him if you don't tell me what I'm protecting him from?"

Richie didn't let go. "Can't you just trust me that this is important?"

“You don’t understand how badly he wants to go to Derry,” Stan said. “If I’m going to keep that from happening, there had better be a damn good reason.”

Richie exhaled slowly, reluctantly—and let go his grip on Stan’s arm. “What Eddie did on Pennywise’s ship,” he said, his voice low. “With the rune on the wall—the Rune of Opening—well, you saw what happened.”

“He destroyed the ship,” said Stan. “Saved all our lives.”

“Keep your voice down.” Richie glanced around anxiously.

“You’re not saying no one else knows about that, are you?” Stan demanded in disbelief.

“I know. You know. Ben and Jim know, Eleven too. No one else.”

“What do they all think happened? The ship just opportunely came apart?”

“I told them Pennywise’s Ritual of Conversion must have gone wrong.”

“You lied to the Clave?” Stan wasn’t sure whether to be impressed or dismayed.

“Yes, I lied to the Clave. Ben and Bill know Eddie has some ability to create new runes, so I doubt I’ll be able to keep that from the Clave or the new Inquisitor. But if they knew he could do what he does—amplify ordinary runes so they have incredible destructive power—they’d want him as a fighter, a weapon. And he’s not equipped for that. He wasn’t brought up for it—” He broke off, as Stan shook his head. “What?”

“You’re Nephilim,” Stan said slowly. “Shouldn’t you want what’s best for the Clave? If that’s using Eddie ...”

“You want them to have him? To put him in the front lines, up against Pennywise and whatever army he’s raising?”

“No,” said Stan. “I don’t want that. But I’m not one of you. I don’t

have to ask myself who to put first, Eddie or my family.”

Richie flushed a slow, dark red. “It’s not like that. If I thought it would help the Clave—but it won’t. He’ll just get hurt—”

“Even if you thought it would help the Clave,” Stan said, “you’d never let them have Eddie.”

“What makes you say that, vampire?”

“Because no one can have him but you,” said Stan.

The color left Richie’s face. “So you won’t help me,” he said in disbelief. “You won’t help *Eddie*?”

Stan hesitated—and before he could respond, a noise split the silence between them. A high, shrieking cry, terrible in its desperation, and worse for the abruptness with which it was cut off. Richie whirled around. “What was that?”

The single shriek was joined by other cries, and a harsh clanging that scraped Stan’s eardrums. “Something’s happened—the others—”

But Richie was already gone, running along the path, dodging the undergrowth. After a moment’s hesitation Stan followed. He had forgotten how fast he could run now—he was hard on Richie’s heels as they rounded the corner of the church and burst out into the garden.

Before them was chaos. A white mist blanketed the garden, and there was a heavy smell in the air—the sharp tang of ozone and something else under it, sweet and unpleasant. Figures darted back and forth—Stan could see them only in fragments, as they appeared and disappeared through gaps in the fog. He glimpsed Ben, as he swung his whip. It made a deadly fork of golden lightning through the shadows. Ben was fending off the advance of something lumbering and huge—a *demon*, Stan thought—but it was full daylight; that was impossible. As he stumbled forward, he saw that the creature was humanoid in shape, but humped and twisted, somehow *wrong*. It carried a thick wooden plank in one hand and was swinging at Ben almost blindly.

Only a short distance away, through a gap in the stone wall, Stan could see the traffic on York Avenue rumbling placidly by. The sky beyond the Institute was clear.

“Forsaken,” Richie whispered. His face was blazing as he drew one of his seraph blades from his belt. “Dozens of them.” He pushed Stan to the side, almost roughly. “Stay here, do you understand? Stay here.”

Stan stood frozen for a moment as Richie plunged forward into the mist. The light of the blade in his hand lit the fog around him to silver; dark figures dashed back and forth inside it, and Stan felt as if he were gazing through a pane of frosted glass, desperately trying to make out what was happening on the other side. Ben had vanished; he saw Bill, his arm bleeding, as he sliced through the chest of a Forsaken warrior and watched it crumple to the ground. Another reared up behind him, but Richie was there, now with a blade in each hand; he leaped into the air and brought them up and then down with a vicious scissoring movement—and the Forsaken’s head tumbled free of its neck, black blood spurting. Stan’s stomach wrenched—the blood smelled bitter, poisonous.

He could hear the Shadowhunters calling to one another out of the mist, though the Forsaken were utterly silent. Suddenly the mist cleared, and Stan saw Eleven, standing wild-eyed by the wall of the Institute. Her hands were raised, blue lightning sparking between them, and against the wall where she stood, a square black hole seemed to be opening in the stone. It wasn’t empty, or dark precisely, but shone like a mirror with whirling fire trapped within its glass. “The Portal!” she was shouting. “Go through the Portal!”

Several things happened at once. Sharon Denbrough appeared out of the mist, carrying the boy, Georgie, in her arms. She paused to call something over her shoulder and then plunged toward the Portal and through it, vanishing into the wall. Bill followed, dragging Ben after him, Ben’s blood-spattered whip trailing on the ground. As he pulled her toward the Portal, something surged up out of the mist behind them—a Forsaken warrior, swinging a double-bladed knife.

Stan unfroze. Darting forward, he called out Bill’s name—then stumbled and pitched forward, hitting the ground hard enough to knock the breath out of him, if he’d had any breath. He scrambled

into a sitting position, turning to see what he'd tripped over.

It was a body. The body of a woman, her throat slit, her eyes wide and blue in death. Blood stained her pale hair. *Rena*.

"Stan, *move!*" It was Richie, shouting; Stan looked and saw the other boy running toward him out of the fog, bloody seraph blades in his hands. Then he looked up. The Forsaken warrior he'd seen chasing Bill loomed over Stan, it's scarred face twisted into a rictus grin. Stan twisted away as the double-bladed knife swung down toward him, but even with his improved reflexes, he wasn't fast enough. A searing pain shot through him as everything went black.

2. The Demon Towers

Beverly was never a fan of boring weekends; if this were any other day, she, Eddie and Stan would be locked up in Beverly's room marathoning some Netflix show an entire night, she missed those days. Now, though, she got to marathon an entire season of *La Casa de Papel* by *herself*, and it was the most boring thing ever. Not the show, but having no one to watch it with.

Kay wasn't even there, she told Beverly she was going out for a last minute shift change at Beanie Cofeee, a nice cafeteria close to Kay's apartment, Beverly loved going there, even when she wasn't a fan of coffee herself, but it was better than staring at the TV for eight hours straight.

Beverly rubbed her temples, and turned off the TV, she could feel a migraine coming. Her phone started to ring, she leaned over the little coffee table on front of her and looked at the screen. Eddie was calling, she kept staring at the screen until the ringtone stopped, then she sighed.

It's not like she didn't want to talk with Eddie, in fact, she desperately wanted to return to him and Stan, but that would be too much for her pride, she made a choice and she needed to be stuck with it.

With Stan was different though, he kept calling and calling that Beverly had no choice but to answer him. Actually, he was calling right now.

Beverly put the phone to her ear. "This is Beverly Marsh. Right now I can't talk with you. Please, leave a message. *Beep*." She highed her tone when she tried to imitate the beep sound and then she laughed.

"Very funny, redhead," She could feel Stan rolling his eyes. "When you get back, I won't buy you burritos."

"No!" Beverly exclaimed. "Anything but the burritos."

Stan laughed. "I should know better than to mess with your food obsession."

She sighed dramatically. "Damn right you should."

"How are you, Bev? Anything interesting happened to you? Did you got to see Kay in the shower?"

"Stan! That's gross!" She said. "Aren't you gay, though?"

"I might be gay, but I'm not blind, you know." Stan chuckled. "You haven't answered my questions."

"Bored. Everything is boring. And no."

"When are you coming back?"

"Honestly," Beverly stood up, and started wandering around the living room like she always did when she talked in the phone. "I wanted to come back the minute I got here."

"Wow. Is it *that* bad?"

"Not really, Kay is great, she's got an Xbox and we play Just Dance every night, and we go to the movies almost daily, and there's pizza for every breakfast."

"Then why do you sound so unsatisfied?"

Beverly shrugged, then she wanted to face palm herself because Stan couldn't see her. "I don't know. It's just...everything is so simple."

"A mundane life, huh?"

"Yup. The old Beverly would've loved to be here, but now that I know everything that's going on with the world...I'm worried all the time."

"I know that feeling," Stan said. Beverly could hear some glasses clinking and a crowd talking in the background.

"Where are you?" Beverly asked, sitting in the couch again. "At a party?"

"If you call a bunch of werewolves drinking a '*party*', then yes," he said in his usual sarcastic tone. "I'm at The Hunter's Moon."

"The Hunter's Moon?" Beverly was surprised. "What the hell are you doing there?"

"I'm meeting—Hey Mike," Stan was interrupted.

"Mike is with you?"

"Yeah, that's why I said '*Hey Mike*'"

"Since when are you guys so close?" Beverly asked curiously.

"Since we almost got killed back at the ship, now we have something to bond about."

Beverly smiled to herself. "It's nice that you're getting some friends, Stan." She laughed.

"Oh yeah, miss social party. Name one female friend of yours, Kay doesn't count."

"Touché." Beverly said. "How's Eddie?"

It took a second too long for Stan to answer. "He's fine, he's going to Derry tonight."

"I know, but are you and him—"

"Mike wants to talk to you, Bev!" Stan interrupted with a teasing tone, she could hear the other boy trying to refuse, but then there was a loud sigh.

"Hey, Beverly." Mike's voice was as calm as Beverly remembered.

"Oh," Beverly tried to not sound sad. "Hey, Wolfie. How are you?"

"I'm trying to kill Stan with my glare, but it doesn't seem to work."

"Trust me, I've tried that a million times." She played with her necklace. "Now that I realize, I don't have your number, do I?"

She heard Stan laugh in the background. "I don't think so. I'll send you a text later."

"Sure," She bit her nails. "Are you okay? I mean, with everything that happened."

"Yeah, I'm good," Mike's tone was confident. "Better than before."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"When are you coming back?"

"Oh," Beverly was caught off guard, she didn't expect for anyone else beside Eddie and Stan to miss her. "Next week, probably."

"That's nice. Maybe we could hang out when you get here," she sensed he was nervous. "If you want too."

"Sure, that sounds fun," Beverly giggled. "Shoot. I gotta go, Kay is coming back any minute and I haven't washed the dishes." She stood up. "Tell Stan he better give me burritos when I come back."

"Noted!" She heard Stan's voice in the background, probably his vampire hearing.

"Roger that," Mike said. "Um. So... if you ever need to talk, we can—"

"I know." She said. "Take care, Wolfie."

"You too, Bev. Good night." And he hung up.

She was used of her nickname coming out of her best friend's mouths, but hearing it from other person made Beverly's stomach shiver, she didn't know why, Ben had said it a few times but she knew he was only teasing her, maybe trying to see how he would react. With Mike was different, it felt like they've known each other their entire lives, as if—

"I'm here!" Kay's voice echoed in the room, making Beverly jump. She was wearing her orange suit, which she used for work. Her strawberry red hair was falling off her shoulders. "A freaking toddler puked in my clothes ten minutes ago."

Beverly laughed. "I would've done the same thing."

Kay stuck out her tongue at her. "*Bitch*. You had fun without me?"

Beverly considered the question, wanting to be honest with her, but...

"So much fun."

There was no amount of magic, Eddie thought as he and Jim circled the block for the third time, that could create new parking spaces on a New York City street. There was nowhere for the truck to pull in, and half the street was double-parked. Finally Jim pulled up at a hydrant and shifted the pickup into neutral with a sigh. "Go on," he said. "Let them know you're here. I'll bring your suitcase."

Eddie nodded, but hesitated before reaching for the door handle. His stomach was tight with anxiety, and he wished, not for the first time, that Jim were going with him. "I always thought that the first time I went overseas, I'd have a passport with me at least."

Jim didn't smile. "I know you're nervous," he said. "But it'll be all right. The Denbroughs will take good care of you."

I've only told you that a million times, Eddie thought. He patted Jim's shoulder lightly before jumping down from the truck. "See you in a few."

Eddie made his way down the cracked stone path, the sound of traffic fading as he neared the church doors. It took him several moments to peel the glamour off the Institute this time. It felt as if another layer of disguise had been added to the old cathedral, like a new coat of paint. Scraping it off with his mind felt hard, even painful. Finally it was gone and he could see the church as it was. The high wooden doors gleamed as if they'd just been polished.

There was a strange smell in the air, like ozone and burning. With a frown he put his hand to the knob. *I am Eddie Gray, one of the Nephilim, and I ask entrance to the Institute—*

The door swung open. Eddie stepped inside. He looked around, blinking, trying to identify what it was that felt somehow different about the cathedral's interior.

He realized it as the door swung shut behind him, trapping him in a blackness relieved only by the dim glow of the rose window far overhead. He had never been inside the entrance to the Institute when there had not been dozens of flames lit in the elaborate candelabras lining the aisle between the pews.

He took his witchlight stone out of his pocket and held it up. Light blazed from it, sending shining spokes of illumination flaring out between his fingers. It lit the dusty corners of the cathedral's interior as he made his way to the elevator near the bare altar and jabbed impatiently at the call button.

Nothing happened. After half a minute he pressed the button again—and again. He laid his ear against the elevator door and listened. Not a sound. The Institute had gone dark and silent, like a mechanical doll whose clockwork heart had run down.

His heart pounding now, Eddie hurried back down the aisle and pushed the heavy doors open. He stood on the front steps of the church, glancing about frantically. The sky was darkening to cobalt overhead, and the air smelled even more strongly of burning. Had there been a fire? Had the Shadowhunters evacuated? But the place looked untouched...

"It wasn't a fire." The voice was soft, velvety and familiar. A tall figure materialized out of the shadows, hair sticking up in a corona of ungainly spikes. She wore a black silk suit over a shimmering emerald green shirt, and brightly jeweled rings on her narrow fingers. There were fancy boots involved as well, and a good deal of glitter.

"Eleven?" Eddie whispered.

"I know what you were thinking," Eleven said. "But there was no fire. That smell is hellmist—it's a sort of enchanted demonic smoke. It mutes the effects of certain kinds of magic."

"Demonic mist? Then there was—"

"An attack on the Institute. Yes. Earlier this afternoon. Forsaken—probably a few dozen of them."

“Richie,” Eddie whispered. “The Denbroughs—”

“The hellsmoke muted my ability to fight the Forsaken effectively. Theirs, too. I had to send them through the Portal into Derry.”

“But none of them were hurt?”

“Rena,” said Eleven. “Rena was killed. I’m sorry, Eddie.”

Eddie sank down onto the steps. He hadn’t known the older woman well, but Rena had been a tenuous connection to his mother—his *real* mother, the tough, fighting Shadowhunter that Eddie had never known.

“Eddie?” Jim was coming up the path through the gathering dark. He had Eddie’s suitcase in one hand. “What’s going on?”

Eddie sat hugging his knees while Eleven explained. Underneath his pain for Rena he was full of a guilty relief. Richie was all right. The Denbroughs were all right. He said it over and over to himself, silently. *Richie is all right.*

“The Forsaken,” Jim said. “They were all killed?”

“Not all of them.” Eleven shook her head. “After I sent the Denbroughs through the Portal, the Forsaken dispersed; they didn’t seem interested in me. By the time I shut the Portal, they were all gone.”

Eddie raised his head. “The Portal’s closed? But—you can still send me to Idris, right?” he asked. “I mean, I can go through the Portal and join the Denbroughs there, can’t I?”

Jim and Eleven exchanged a look. Jim set the suitcase down by his feet.

“Jane?” Eddie’s voice rose, shrill in his own ears. “I have to go.”

“The Portal is closed, Eddie—”

“Then open another one!”

“It’s not that easy,” the warlock said. “The Clave guards any magical entry into Alicante very carefully. Their capital is a holy place to them—it’s like their Vatican, their Forbidden City. No Downworlders can come there without permission, and no mundanes.”

“But I’m a Shadowhunter!”

“Only barely,” said Eleven. “Besides, the towers prevent direct Portaling to the city. To open a Portal that went through to Alicante, I’d have to have them standing by on the other side expecting you. If I tried to send you through on my own, it would be in direct contravention of the Law, and I’m not willing to risk that for you, biscuit, no matter how much I might like you personally.”

Eddie looked from Eleven’s regretful face to Jim’s wary one. “But I *need* to get to Derry,” he said. “I need to help my mother. There must be some other way to get there, some way that doesn’t involve a Portal.”

“The nearest airport is a country over,” Jim said. “If we could get across the border—and that’s a big ‘if’—there would be a long and dangerous overland journey after that, through all sorts of Downworlder territory. It could take us days to get there.”

Eddie’s eyes were burning. *I will not cry*, he told himself. *I will not.*

“Eddie.” Jim’s voice was gentle. “We’ll get in touch with the Denbroughs. We’ll make sure they have all the information they need to get the antidote for Sonia. They can contact Prasad—”

But Eddie was on his feet, shaking his head. “It has to be me,” he said. “Rena said Prasad wouldn’t talk to anyone else.”

“Prasad? Kali Prasad?” Eleven echoed. “I can try to get a message to her. Let her know to expect Richie.”

Some of the worry cleared from Jim’s face. “Eddie, do you hear that? With Jane’s help—”

But Eddie didn’t want to hear any more about Jane’s help. He didn’t want to hear anything. He had thought he was going to save his mother, and now there was going to be nothing for him to do but sit

by his mother's bedside, hold her limp hand, and hope someone else, somewhere else, would be able to do what he couldn't.

He scrambled down the steps, pushing past Jim when he tried to reach out for him. "I just need to be alone for a second."

"Eddie—" He heard Jim call out to him, but he pulled away from him, darting around the side of the cathedral. Eddie found himself following the stone path where it forked, making his way toward the small garden on the Institute's east side, toward the smell of char and ashes—and a thick, sharp smell under that. The smell of demonic magic. There was mist in the garden still, scattered bits of it like trails of cloud caught here and there on the edge of a rosebush or hiding under a stone. Eddie could see where the earth had been churned up earlier by the fighting—and there was a dark red stain there, by one of the stone benches, that he didn't want to look at long.

Eddie turned her head away. And paused. There, against the wall of the cathedral, were the unmistakable marks of rune magic, glowing a hot, fading blue against the gray stone. They formed a squarish outline, like the outline of light around a half-open door....

The Portal.

Something inside him seemed to twist. He remembered other symbols, shining dangerously against the smooth metal hull of a ship. He remembered the shudder the ship had given as it had wrenched itself apart, the black water of the East River pouring in. *They're just runes*, he thought. *Symbols. I can draw them. If my mother can trap the essence of the Mortal Cup inside a piece of paper, then I can make a Portal.*

He found his feet carrying him to the cathedral wall, his hand reaching into his pocket for his stele. Willing his hand not to shake, he set the tip of the stele to the stone.

He squeezed his eyelids shut and, against the darkness behind them, began to draw with his mind in curving lines of light. Lines that spoke to him of doorways, of being carried on whirling air, of travel and faraway places. The lines came together in a rune as graceful as a bird in flight. He didn't know if it was a rune that had existed before

or one he had invented, but it existed now as if it always had.

Portal.

He began to draw, the marks leaping out from the stele's tip in charcoaled black lines. The stone sizzled, filling his nose with the acidic smell of burning. Hot blue light grew against his closed eyelids. He felt heat on his face, as if he stood in front of a fire. With a gasp he lowered his hand, opening his eyes.

The rune he had drawn was a dark flower blossoming on the stone wall. As he watched, the lines of it seemed to melt and change, flowing gently down, unfurling, reshaping themselves. Within moments the shape of the rune had changed. It was now the outline of a glowing doorway, several feet taller than Eddie himself.

Hee couldn't tear his eyes from the doorway. It shone with the same dark light as the Portal behind the curtain at Madame Dorothea's. He reached out for it—

And recoiled. To use a Portal, he remembered with a sinking feeling, you had to imagine where you wanted to go, where you wanted the Portal to take you. But he had never been to Derry. It had been described to him, of course. A place of green valleys, of dark woods and bright water, of lakes and mountains, and Alicante, the city of glass towers. He could imagine what it might look like, but imagination wasn't enough, not with this magic. If only ...

He took a sudden sharp breath. But he *had* seen Derry. He'd seen it in a dream, and he knew, without knowing how he knew, that it had been a true dream. After all, what had Richie said to him in the dream about Stan? That he couldn't stay because *This place is for the living*? And not long after that, Stan had died....

Eddie cast his memory back to the dream. He had been dancing in a ballroom in Alicante. The walls had been gold and white, with a clear, diamondlike roof overhead. There had been a fountain—a silver dish with a mermaid statue at the center—and lights strung in the trees outside the windows, and Eddie had been wearing a green jacket, just as he was now.

As if he were still in the dream, he reached for the Portal. A bright light spread under the touch of his fingers, a door opening onto a lighted place beyond. He found himself staring into a whirling golden maelstrom that slowly began to coalesce into discernible shapes—he thought he could see the outline of mountains, a piece of sky—

“Eddie!” It was Jim, racing up the path, his face a mask of anger and dismay. Behind him strode Eleven, her cat eyes shining like metal in the hot Portal light that bathed the garden. “Eddie, stop! The wards are dangerous! You’ll get yourself killed!”

But there was no stopping now. Beyond the Portal the golden light was growing. Eddie thought of the gold walls of the Hall in his dream, the golden light refracting off the cut glass everywhere. Jim was wrong; he didn’t understand Eddie’s gift, how it worked—what did wards matter when you could create your own reality just by drawing it? “I have to go,” he cried, moving forward, his fingertips outstretched. “Jim, I’m sorry—”

Eddie stepped forward—and with a last, swift leap, Jim was at Eddie’s side, catching at his wrist, just as the Portal seemed to explode all around them. Like a tornado snatching a tree up by the roots, the force yanked them both off their feet. Eddie caught a last glimpse of the cars and buildings of Manhattan spinning away from him, vanishing as a whiplash-hard current of wind caught him, sending him hurtling, his wrist still in Jim’s iron grip, into a whirling golden chaos.

Stan awoke to the rhythmic slap of water. He sat up, sudden terror freezing his chest—the last time he’d woken up to the sound of waves, he’d been a prisoner on Pennywise’s ship, and the soft liquid noise brought him back to that terrible time with an immediacy that was like a dash of ice water in the face.

But no—a quick look around told him that he was somewhere else entirely. For one thing, he was lying under soft blankets on a comfortable wooden bed in a small, clean room whose walls were painted a pale blue. Dark curtains were drawn over the window, but the faint light around their edges was enough for his vampire’s eyes

to see clearly. There was a bright rug on the floor and a mirrored cupboard on one wall.

There was also an armchair pulled up to the side of the bed. Stan sat up, the blankets falling away, and realized two things: one, that he was still wearing the same jeans and T-shirt he'd been wearing when he'd headed to the Institute to meet Richie; and two, that the person in the chair was dozing, his head propped on his hand, with messy auburn hair.

"Ben?" Stan said.

Ben's head popped up like a startled jack-in-the-box's, his eyes flying open. "Oooh! You're awake!" He sat up straight, trying to fix his hair with his hand. "Richie'll be so relieved. We were almost totally sure you were going to die."

"Die?" Stan echoed. He felt dizzy and a little sick. "From what?" He glanced around the room, blinking. "Am I in the Institute?" he asked, and realized the moment the words were out of his mouth that that, of course, was impossible. "I mean—where are we?"

An uneasy flicker passed across Ben's face. "Well ... you mean, you don't remember what happened in the garden?" He tugged nervously at the crochet trim that bordered the chair's upholstery. "The Forsaken attacked us. There were a lot of them, and the hellmist made it hard to fight them. Eleven opened up the Portal, and we were all running into it when I saw you coming toward us. You tripped over—over Rena. And there was a Forsaken just behind you; you must not have seen it, but Richie did. He tried to get to you, but it was too late. The Forsaken stuck its knife into you. You bled—a lot. And Richie killed the Forsaken and picked you up and dragged you through the Portal with him," he finished, speaking so rapidly that his words blurred together and Stan had to strain to catch them. "And we were already on the other side, and let me tell you, everyone was pretty surprised when Richie came through with you bleeding all over him. The Consul wasn't at all pleased."

Stan's mouth was dry. "The Forsaken *stuck its knife into me*?" It seemed impossible. But then, he had healed before, after Valentine had cut his throat. Still, he at least ought to remember. Shaking his

head, he looked down at himself. "Where?"

"I'll show you." Much to his surprise, a moment later Ben was seated on the bed beside him, her cool hands on his midriff. He pushed Stan's T-shirt up, baring a strip of pale stomach, bisected by a thin red line. It was barely a scar. "Here," Ben said, his fingers gliding over it. "Is there any pain?"

"N-no." The first time Stan had ever seen Ben, he'd found him so striking, so alight with life and vitality and energy, similar to Eddie in that department. It shouldn't had been a surprise though, they were brothers. Regardless, Stan had *drank* his blood, and he still felt weird around Ben. "It doesn't hurt."

"But my eyes do," said a coolly amused voice from the doorway. Richie. He had come in so quietly that even Stan hadn't heard him; closing the door behind him, he grinned as Ben pulled Stan's shirt down. "Molesting the vampire while he's too weak to fight back, Ben?" he asked. "I'm pretty sure that violates at least one of the Accords."

"I'm just showing him where he got stabbed," Ben rolled his eyes, and he scooted back to his chair with a certain amount of haste. "What's going on downstairs?" he asked. "Is everyone still freaking out?"

The smile left Richie's face. "Sharon has gone up to the Gard with Neil," he said. "The Clave's in session and Malachi thought it would be better if she ... explained ... in person."

Malachi. Neil. Gard. The unfamiliar names whirled through Stan's head. "Explained what?"

Ben and Richie exchanged a look. "Explained *you*," Richie said finally. "Explained why we brought a vampire with us to Alicante, which is, by the way, expressly against the Law."

"To Alicante? We're in Alicante?" A wave of blank panic washed over Stan, quickly replaced by a pain that shot through his midsection. He doubled over, gasping.

“Stan!” Ben reached out his hand, alarm in his dark eyes. “Are you all right?”

“Go away, Ben.” Stan, his hands fisted against his stomach, looked up at Richie, pleading in his voice. “Make him go.”

Ben recoiled, a hurt look on his face. “Fine. I’ll go. You don’t have to tell me twice.” He flounced to his feet and out of the room, banging the door behind him. Richie turned to Stan, his amber eyes expressionless. “What’s going on? I thought you were healing.”

Stan threw up a hand to ward the other boy off. A metallic taste burned in the back of his throat. “It’s not Ben,” he ground out. “I’m not hurt—I’m just ... hungry.” He felt his cheeks burn. “I lost blood, so—I need to replace it.”

“Of course,” Richie said, in the tone of someone who’s just been enlightened by an interesting, if not particularly necessary, scientific fact. The faint concern left his expression, to be replaced by something that looked to Stan like amused contempt. It struck a chord of fury inside him, and if he hadn’t been so debilitated by pain, he would have flung himself off the bed and onto the other boy in a rage. As it was, all he could do was gasp, “Screw you, Tozier.”

“Tozier, is it?” The amused look didn’t leave Richie’s face, but his hands went to his throat and began to unzip his jacket.

Stan shrank back on the bed. “I don’t care how hungry I am. I’m not ... drinking your blood.”

Richie’s mouth twisted. “Like I’d let you.” He reached into the inside pocket of his jacket and drew out a glass flask. It was half-full of a thin red-brown liquid. “I thought you might need this,” he said. “I squeezed the juice out of a few pounds of raw meat in the kitchen. It was the best I could do.”

Stan took the flask from Richie with hands that were shaking so badly that the other boy had to unscrew the top for him. The liquid inside was foul—too thin and salty to be proper blood, and with that faint unpleasant taste that Stan knew meant the meat had been a few days old. “Ugh,” he said, after a few swallows. “Dead blood.”

Richie's eyebrows went up. "Isn't all blood dead?"

"The longer the animal whose blood I'm drinking has been dead, the worse the blood tastes," Stan explained. "Fresh is better."

"But you've never drunk fresh blood. Have you?"

Stan stared at him. Considering the idea of telling him about Ben, but decided to shrug it off for now.

Stan set the empty flask down on the arm of the chair by the bed. His mouth still tasted of spoiled blood, but the pain was gone. He felt better, stronger, as if the blood were a medicine that worked instantly, a drug he had to have to live. He wondered if this was what it was like for heroin addicts. "So I'm in Derry."

"Alicante, to be specific," said Richie. "The capital city. The *only* city, really." He went to the window and drew back the curtains. "The Mayfields didn't really believe us," he said. "That the sun wouldn't bother you. They put these blackout curtains up. But you should look."

Rising from the bed, Stan joined Richie at the window. And stared.

A few years ago his mother had taken him and his sister on a trip to Tuscany—a week of heavy, unfamiliar pasta dishes, unsalted bread, hardy brown countryside, and his mother speeding down narrow, twisting roads, barely avoiding crashing their Fiat into the beautiful old buildings they'd ostensibly come to see. He remembered stopping on a hillside just opposite a town called San Gimignano, a collection of rust-colored buildings dotted here and there with high towers whose tops soared upward as if reaching for the sky. If what he was looking at now reminded him of anything, it was that; but it was also so alien that it was genuinely unlike anything he'd ever seen before.

He was looking out of an upper window in what must have been a fairly tall house. If he glanced up, he could see stone eaves and sky beyond. Across the way was another house, not quite as tall as this one, and between them ran a narrow, dark canal, crossed here and there by bridges—the source of the water he'd heard before. The house seemed to be built partway up a hill—below it honey-colored

stone houses, clustered along narrow streets, fell away to the edge of a green circle: woods, surrounded by hills that were very far away; from here they resembled long green and brown strips dotted with bursts of autumn colors. Behind the hills rose jagged mountains frosted with snow.

But none of that was what was strange; what was strange was that here and there in the city, placed seemingly at random, rose soaring towers crowned with spires of reflective whitish-silvery material. They seemed to pierce the sky like shining daggers, and Stan realized where he had seen that material before: in the hard, glasslike weapons the Shadowhunters carried, the ones they called seraph blades.

“Those are the demon towers,” Richie said, in response to Stan’s unasked question. “They control the wards that protect the city. Because of them, no demon can enter Alicante.”

The air that came in through the window was cold and clean, the sort of air you never breathed in New York City: It tasted of nothing, not dirt or smoke or metal or other people. Just air. Stan took a deep, unnecessary breath of it before he turned to look at Richie; some human habits died hard. “Tell me,” he said, “that bringing me here was an accident. Tell me this wasn’t somehow all part of you wanting to stop Eddie from coming with you.”

Richie didn’t look at him, but his chest rose and fell once, quickly, in a sort of suppressed gasp. “That’s right,” he said. “I created a bunch of Forsaken warriors, had them attack the Institute and kill Rena and nearly kill the rest of us, just so that I could keep Eddie at home. And lo and behold, my diabolical plan is working.”

“Well, it is working,” Stan said quietly. “Isn’t it?”

“Listen, vampire,” Richie said. “Keeping Eddie from Derry was the plan. Bringing you here was not the plan. I brought you through the Portal because if I’d left you behind, bleeding and unconscious, the Forsaken would have killed you.”

“You could have stayed behind with me—”

"They would have killed us both. I couldn't even tell how many of them there were, not with the hellmist. Even I can't fight off a hundred Forsaken."

"And yet," Stan said, "I bet it pains you to admit that."

"You're an ass," Richie said, without inflection, "even for a Downworlder. I saved your life and I broke the Law to do it. Not for the first time, I might add. You could show a little gratitude."

"*Gratitude?*" Stan felt his fingers curl in against his palms. "If you hadn't dragged me to the Institute, I wouldn't be here. I never agreed to this."

"You did," said Richie, "when you said you'd do anything for Eddie. *This* is anything."

Before Stan could snap back an angry retort, there was a knock on the door. "Hello?" Ben called from the other side. "Stan, is your diva moment over? I need to talk to Richie."

"Come in, Benny." Richie didn't take his eyes off Stan; there was an electric anger in his gaze, and a sort of challenge that made Stan long to hit him with something heavy. Like a pickup truck.

"Don't call me that," Ben said without preamble. "Bill wants to talk to you about Stan before he leaves. Can you come downstairs?"

"Sure." Richie headed for the door; halfway there, he realized Stan was following him and turned with a glower. "You stay here."

"No," Stan said. "If you're going to be discussing me, I want to be there for it."

For a moment it looked as if Richie's icy calm was about to snap; he flushed and opened his mouth, his eyes flashing. Just as quickly, the anger vanished, tamped down by an obvious act of will. He gritted his teeth and smiled. "Fine," he said. "Come on downstairs, vampire. You can meet the whole happy family."

3. We Happy Few

The first time Eddie had gone through a Portal, there had been a sense of flying, of weightless tumbling. This time it was like being thrust into the heart of a tornado. Howling winds tore at him, ripped his hand from Jim's and the scream from his mouth. He fell whirling through the heart of a black and gold maelstrom.

Something flat and hard and silvery like the surface of a mirror rose up in front of him. Eddie plunged toward it, shrieking, throwing his hands up to cover his face. He struck the surface and broke through, into a world of brutal cold and gasping suffocation. He was sinking through a thick blue darkness, trying to breathe, but he couldn't draw air into his lungs, only more of the freezing coldness—

Suddenly he was seized by the back of his coat and hauled upward. Eddie kicked feebly but was too weak to break the hold on him. It drew him up, and the indigo darkness around him turned to pale blue and then to gold as he broke the surface of the water—it was water—and sucked in a gasp of air. Or tried to. Instead he choked and gagged, black spots dotting his vision. He was being dragged through the water, fast, weeds catching and tugging at his legs and arms—he twisted around in the grip that held him and caught a terrifying glimpse of something, not quite wolf and not quite human, ears as pointed as daggers and lips drawn back from sharp white teeth. He tried to scream, but only water came up.

A moment later he was out of the water and being flung onto damp hard-packed earth. There were hands on his shoulders, slamming him facedown against the ground. The hands struck his back, over and over, until his chest spasmed and he coughed up a bitter stream of water.

He was still choking when the hands rolled him onto his back. He was looking up at Jim, a black shadow against a high blue sky touched with white clouds. The gentleness Eddie was used to seeing in his expression was gone; Jim was no longer wolflike, but he looked furious. He hauled Eddie into a sitting position, shaking him hard, over and over, until he gasped and struck out at him weakly. "Jim! Stop it! You're hurting me—"

His hands left Eddie's shoulders. Jim grabbed his chin in one hand instead, forcing Eddie's head up, his eyes searching his face. "The water," he said. "Did you cough up all the water?"

"I think so," Eddie whispered. His voice came faintly from his swollen throat.

"Where's your stele?" he demanded, and when Eddie hesitated, his voice sharpened. "Eddie. Your stele. Find it."

Eddie pulled away from his grasp and rummaged in his wet pockets, his heart sinking as his fingers scrabbled against nothing but damp material. He turned a miserable face up to Jim. "I think I must have dropped it in the lake." He sniffled. "My ... my mother's stele ..."

"Jesus, Eddie." Jim stood up, clasping his hands distractedly behind his head. He was soaking wet too, water running off his jeans and heavy flannel coat in thick rivulets. The spectacles he usually wore halfway down his nose were gone. He looked down at her somberly. "You're all right," he said. It wasn't really a question. "I mean, right now. You feel all right?"

Eddie nodded. "Jim, what's wrong? Why do we need my stele?"

Jim said nothing. He was looking around as if hoping to glean some assistance from their surroundings. Eddie followed his gaze. They were on the wide dirt bank of a good-size lake. The water was pale blue, sparkled here and there with reflected sunlight. Eddie wondered if it was the source of the gold light he'd seen through the half-open Portal. There was nothing sinister about the lake now that he was next to it instead of in it. It was surrounded by green hills dotted with trees just beginning to turn russet and gold. Beyond the hills rose high mountains, their peaks capped in snow.

Eddie shivered. "Jim, when we were in the water—did you go part wolf? I thought I saw—"

"My wolf self can swim better than my human self," Jim said shortly. "And it's stronger. I had to drag you through the water, and you weren't offering much help."

"I know," Eddie said. "I'm sorry. You weren't—you weren't supposed to come with me."

"If I hadn't, you'd be dead now," he pointed out. "Jane told you, Eddie. You can't use a Portal to get into the Glass City unless you have someone waiting for you on the other side."

"She said it was against the Law. She didn't say if I tried to get there I'd *bounce off*."

"She told you there are wards up around the city that prevent Portaling into it. It's not her fault you decided to play around with magic you just barely understand. Just because you have power doesn't mean you know how to use it." He scowled.

"I'm sorry," Eddie said in a small voice. "It's just—where are we now?"

"Lake Lyn," said Jim. "I think the Portal took us as close to the city as it could and then dumped us. We're on the outskirts of Alicante." He looked around, shaking his head half in amazement and half in weariness. "You did it, Eddie. We're in Derry."

"Derry?" Eddie said, and stood staring stupidly out across the lake. It twinkled back at him, blue and undisturbed. "But—you said we were on the outskirts of Alicante. I don't see the city anywhere."

"We're miles away." Jim pointed. "You see those hills in the distance? We have to cross over those; the city is on the other side. If we had a car, we could get there in an hour, but we're going to have to walk, which will probably take all afternoon." He squinted up at the sky. "We'd better get going."

Eddie looked down at himself in dismay. The prospect of a daylong hike in soaking wet clothes did not appeal. "Isn't there anything else...?"

"Anything else we can do?" Jim said, and there was a sudden sharp edge of anger to his voice. "Do you have any suggestions, Eddie, since you're the one who brought us here?" He pointed away from the lake. "That way lie mountains. Passable on foot only in high

summer. We'd freeze to death on the peaks." He turned, stabbed his finger in another direction. "That way lie miles of woods. They run all the way to the border. They're uninhabited, at least by human beings. Past Alicante there's farmland and country houses. Maybe we could get out of Derry, but we'd still have to pass through the city. A city, I may add, where Downworlders like myself are hardly welcome."

Eddie looked at him with his mouth open. "Jim, I didn't know—"

"Of course you didn't know. You don't know anything about Derry. You don't even care about Derry. You were just upset about being left behind, like a child, and you had a tantrum. And now we're here. Lost and freezing and—" He broke off, his face tight. "Come on. Let's start walking."

Eddie followed Jim along the edge of Lake Lyn in a miserable silence. As they walked, the sun dried his hair and skin, but the velvet coat held water like a sponge. It hung on him like a lead curtain as he tripped hastily over rocks and mud, trying to keep up with Jim's long-legged stride.

Eddie made a few further attempts at conversation, but Jim remained stubbornly silent. He'd never done anything so bad before that an apology hadn't softened Jim's anger. This time, it seemed, was different. The cliffs rose higher around the lake as they progressed, pocked with spots of darkness, like splashes of black paint. As Eddie looked more closely, he realized they were caves in the rock. Some looked like they went very deep, twisting away into darkness. Eddie imagined bats and creepy-crawling things hiding in the blackness, and shivered.

At last a narrow path cutting through the cliffs led them to a wide road lined with crushed stones. The lake curved away behind them, indigo in the late afternoon sunlight. The road cut through a flat grassy plain that rose to rolling hills in the distance. Eddie's heart sank; the city was nowhere in sight.

Jim was staring toward the hills with a look of intense dismay on his face. "We're farther than I thought. It's been such a long time...."

“Maybe if we found a bigger road,” Eddie suggested, “we could hitchhike, or get a ride to the city, or—”

“Eddie. There are no cars in Derry.” Seeing his shocked expression, Jim laughed without much amusement. “The wards foul up the machinery. Most technology doesn’t work here—mobile phones, computers, the like. Alicante itself is lit—and powered—mostly by witchlight.”

“Oh,” Eddie said in a small voice. “Well—about how *far* from the city are we?”

“Far enough.” Without looking at him, Jim raked both his hands back through his short hair. “There’s something I’d better tell you.”

Eddie tensed. All he’d wanted before was for Jim to talk to him; now he didn’t want it anymore. “It’s all right—”

“Did you notice,” Jim said, “that there weren’t any boats on Lake Lyn—no docks—nothing that might suggest the lake is used in any way by the people of Derry?”

“I just thought that was because it was so remote.”

“It’s not that remote. A few hours from Alicante on foot. The fact is, the lake—” Jim broke off and sighed. “Did you ever notice the pattern on the library floor at the Institute in New York?”

Eddie blinked. “I did, but I couldn’t figure out what it was.”

“It was an angel rising out of a lake, holding a cup and a sword. It’s a repeating motif in Nephilim decorations. The legend is that the Angel Raziel rose out of Lake Lyn when he first appeared to Jonathan Shadowhunter, the first of the Nephilim, and gave him the Mortal Instruments. Ever since then the lake has been—”

“Sacred?” Eddie suggested.

“Cursed,” Jim said. “The water of the lake is in some way poisonous to Shadowhunters. It won’t hurt Downworlders—the Fair Folk call it the Mirror of Dreams, and they drink its water because they claim it gives them true visions. But for a Shadowhunter to drink the water is

very dangerous. It causes hallucinations, fever—it can drive a person to madness.”

Eddie felt cold all over. “That’s why you tried to make me spit the water out.”

Jim nodded. “And why I wanted you to find your stele. With a healing rune, we could stave off the water’s effects. Without it, we need to get you to Alicante as quickly as possible. There are medicines, herbs, that will help, and I know someone who will almost certainly have them.”

“The Denbroughs?”

“Not the Denbroughs.” Jim’s voice was firm. “Someone else. Someone I know.”

“Who?”

He shook his head. “Let’s just pray this person hasn’t moved away in the last fifteen years.”

“But I thought you said it was against the Law for Downworlders to come into Alicante without permission.”

His answering smile was a reminder of the Jim who had caught him when he’d fallen off the jungle gym as a child, the Jim who had always protected him. “Some laws were meant to be broken.”

The Mayfields’ house reminded Stan of the Institute—it had that same sense of belonging somehow to another era. The halls and stairways were narrow, made of stone and dark wood, and the windows were tall and thin, giving out onto views of the city. There was a distinctly Asian feel to the decorations: a shoji screen stood on the first-floor landing, and there were lacquer-flowered tall Chinese vases on the windowsills. There were also a number of silk-screen prints on the walls, showing what must have been scenes from Shadowhunter mythology, but with an Eastern feel to them—warlords wielding glowing seraph blades were prominently featured, alongside colorful dragonlike creatures and slithering, pop-eyed

demons.

“Mrs. Mayfield—Susan—used to run the Beijing Institute. She splits her time between here and the Forbidden City,” Ben said as Stan paused to examine a print. “And the Mayfields are an old family. Wealthy.”

“I can tell,” Stan muttered, looking up at the chandeliers, dripping cut-glass crystals like teardrops.

Richie, on the step behind them, grunted. “Move it along. We’re not taking a historical tour here.”

Stan weighed a rude retort and decided it wasn’t worth bothering. He took the rest of the stairs at a rapid pace; they opened out at the bottom into a large room. It was an odd mixture of the old and the new: A glass picture window looked out onto the canal, and there was music playing from a stereo that Stan couldn’t see. But there was no television, no stack of DVDs or CDs, the sort of detritus Stan associated with modern living rooms. Instead there were a number of overstuffed couches grouped around a large fireplace, in which flames were crackling.

Bill stood by the fireplace, in dark Shadowhunter gear, drawing on a pair of gloves. He looked up as Stan entered the room and scowled his habitual scowl, but said nothing.

Seated on the couches were two teenagers Stan had never seen before, a boy and a girl. The girl looked the same age as everyone, with glossy reddish hair, almost orange, pulled back from her face, delicate blue eyes, and a mischievous expression. Her delicate chin narrowed into a point like a cat’s. She wasn’t exactly pretty, but she was very striking.

The black-haired boy beside her was more than striking. He was probably Richie’s height, but seemed taller, even sitting down; he was slender and muscular, with a pale, elegant, restless face, all cheekbones and dark eyes. There was something strangely familiar about him, as if Stan had met him before.

The girl spoke first. “Is that the vampire?” She looked Stan up and

down as if she were taking his measurements. "I've never really been this close to a vampire before—not one I wasn't planning to kill, at least." She cocked her head to the side. "He's cute, for a Downworlder."

"You'll have to forgive her; she has the face of an angel and the manners of a Moloch demon," said the boy with a smile, getting to his feet. He held his hand out to Stan. "I'm Henry. Henry Bowers. And this is my cousin, Maxine Mayfield. Max—"

"I don't shake hands with Downworlders," Max said, shrinking back against the couch cushions. "They don't have *souls*, you know. Vampires."

Henry's smile disappeared. "Max—"

"It's true. That's why they can't see themselves in mirrors, or go in the sun."

Very deliberately, Stan stepped backward, into the patch of sunlight in front of the window. He felt the sun hot on his back, his hair. His shadow was cast, long and dark, across the floor, almost reaching Richie's feet.

Max took a sharp breath but said nothing. It was Henry who spoke, looking at Stan with curious black eyes. "So it's true. The Denbroughs said, but I didn't think—"

"That we were telling the truth?" Richie said, speaking for the first time since they'd come downstairs. "We wouldn't lie about something like this. Stan's ... unique."

Max's eyebrows shot up. "The last time I saw you, Rich, you wouldn't even have considered—"

"The last time w-we all saw each other, Richie was ten," Bill said. "Things change. Now, Mom had to leave here in a hurry, so someone has to take her notes and records up to the Gard for her. I'm the only one who's eighteen, so I'm the only one w-who can go while the Clave's in session."

"We know," Ben said, flopping down onto a couch. "You've already

told us that, like, five times.”

Bill, who was looking important, ignored this. “Richie, y-you brought the vampire here, so you’re in charge of him. Don’t let him go outside.” *The vampire*, Stan thought. It wasn’t like Bill didn’t know his name. He’d saved Bill’s life once. Now he was “the vampire.” Even for Bill, who was prone to the occasional fit of inexplicable sullenness, this was obnoxious. Maybe it had something to do with being in Derry. Maybe Bill felt a greater need to assert his Shadowhunterness here.

“*That’s* what you brought me down here to tell me? Don’t let the vampire go outside? I wouldn’t have done that anyway.” Richie slid onto the couch beside Max, who looked pleased. “You’d better hurry up to the Gard and back. God knows what depravity we might get up to here without your guidance.”

Bill gazed at Richie with calm superiority. “Try to hold it together. I’ll be b-back in half an hour.” He vanished through an archway that led to a long corridor; somewhere in the distance, a door clicked shut.

“You shouldn’t bait him,” Ben said, shooting Richie a severe look. “They did leave him in charge.”

Max, Stan couldn’t help but notice, was sitting very close to Richie, their shoulders touching, even though there was plenty of room around them on the couch. “Did you ever think that in a past life Bill was an old woman with ninety cats who was always yelling at the neighborhood kids to get off her lawn? Because I do,” Richie said, and Max giggled. “Just because he’s the only one who can go to the Gard—”

“What’s the Gard?” Stan asked, tired of having no idea what anyone was talking about. Richie looked at him. His expression was cool, unfriendly; his hand was atop Max’s where it rested on her thigh. “Sit down,” he said, jerking his head toward an armchair. “Or did you plan to hover in the corner like a bat?”

Great. Bat jokes. Stan settled himself uncomfortably in the chair.

“The Gard is the official meeting place of the Clave,” Henry said,

apparently taking pity on Stan. “It’s where the Law is made, and where the Consul and Inquisitor reside. Only adult Shadowhunters are allowed onto its grounds when the Clave is in session.”

“In session?” Stan asked, remembering what Richie had said earlier, upstairs. “You mean—not because of *me*?”

Henry laughed. “No. Because of Pennywise and the Mortal Instruments. That’s why everyone’s here. To discuss what Pennywise’s going to do next.”

“Well, he’ll go after the Mirror,” Stan said. “The third of the Mortal Instruments, right? Is it here in Derry? Is that why everyone’s here?”

There was a short silence before Ben answered. “The thing about the Mirror is that no one knows where it is. In fact, no one knows *what* it is.”

“It’s a mirror,” Stan said. “You know—reflective, glass. I’m just assuming.”

“What Ben means,” said Henry kindly, “is that nobody knows anything about the Mirror. There are multiple mentions of it in Shadowhunter histories, but no specifics about where it is, what it looks like, or, most important, what it does.”

“We assume Pennywise wants it,” said Ben, “but that doesn’t help much, since no one’s got a clue where it is. The Silent Brothers might have had an idea, but Pennywise killed them all. There won’t be more for at least a little while.”

“All of them?” Stan demanded in surprise. “I thought he only killed the ones in New York.”

“The Bone City isn’t really in New York,” Ben said. “It’s like—remember the entrance to the Seelie Court, in Central Park? Just because the entrance is there doesn’t mean the Court itself is under the park. It’s the same with the Bone City. There are various entrances, but the City itself—” Ben broke off as Max shushed him with a quick gesture. Stan looked from her face to Richie’s to Henry’s. They all had the same guarded expression, as if they’d just realized

what they'd been doing: Telling Nephilim secrets to a Downworlder. A vampire. Not the enemy, precisely, but certainly someone who couldn't be trusted.

Max was the first one to break the silence. Fixing her pretty, dark gaze on Stan, she said, "So—what's it like, being a vampire?"

"Max!" Ben looked appalled. "You can't just go around asking people what it's like to be a vampire."

"I don't see why," Max said. "He hasn't been a vampire that long, has he? So he must remember what it was like being a person." She turned back to Stan. "Does blood still taste like blood to you? Or does it taste like something else now, like orange juice or something? Because I would think the taste of blood would—"

"It tastes like chicken," Stan said, just to shut her up.

"Really?" Max looked astonished.

"He's making fun of you, Max," said Henry, "as well he should. I apologize for my cousin again, Stan. Those of us who were brought up outside Derry tend to have a little more familiarity with Downworlders."

"But weren't you brought up in Derry?" Ben asked. "I thought your parents—"

"Ben," Richie interrupted, but it was already too late; Henry's expression darkened.

"My parents are dead," he said. "A demon nest near Calais—it's all right; it was a long time ago." He waved away Ben's protestation of sympathy. "My aunt—my father's sister—brought me up at the Institute in Paris."

"So you speak French?" Ben sighed. "I wish I spoke another language. But Keene never thought we needed to learn anything but ancient Greek and Latin, and nobody speaks those."

"I also speak Russian and Italian. And some Romanian," Henry said with a modest smile. "I could teach you some phrases—"

“Romanian? That’s impressive,” said Richie. “Not many people speak it.”

“Do you?” Henry asked with interest.

“Not really,” Richie said with a smile so disarming Stan knew he was lying. “My Romanian is pretty much limited to useful phrases like, ‘Are these snakes poisonous?’ and ‘But you look much too young to be a police officer.’”

Henry didn’t smile. There was something about his expression, Stan thought. It was mild—everything about him was calm—but Stan had the sense that the mildness hid something beneath it that belied his outward tranquility. “I do like traveling,” he said, his eyes on Richie. “But it’s good to be back, isn’t it?”

Richie paused in the act of playing with Max’s fingers. “What do you mean?”

“Just that there’s nowhere else quite like Derry, however much we Nephilim might make homes for ourselves elsewhere. Don’t you agree?”

“Why are you asking me?” Richie’s look was icy.

Henry shrugged. “Well, you lived here as a child, didn’t you? And it’s been years since you’ve been back. Or did I get that wrong?”

“You didn’t get it wrong,” Ben said impatiently. “Richie likes to pretend that everyone isn’t talking about him, even when he knows they are.”

Though Richie was glaring at him, Henry seemed unruffled. Stan felt a sort of half-reluctant liking for the dark-haired Shadowhunter boy. It was rare to find someone who didn’t react to Richie’s taunts. He turned to Ben. “These days in Derry it’s all anyone talks about. You, the Mortal Instruments, your father, your brother—”

“Edward was supposed to come with you, wasn’t he?” Max said. “I was looking forward to meeting him. What happened?”

Though Richie’s expression didn’t change, he drew his hand back

from Max's, curling it into a fist. "He didn't want to leave New York. His mother's ill in the hospital."

"It's weird," Ben said. "I really thought he *wanted* to come."

"He did," said Stan. "In fact—"

Richie was on his feet, so fast that Stan didn't even see him move. "Come to think of it, I have something I need to discuss with Stan. In private." He jerked his head toward the double doors at the far end of the room, his eyes glittering a challenge. "Come on, vampire," he said, in a tone that left Stan with the distinct feeling that a refusal would probably end in some kind of violence. "Let's talk."

4. Sparks Fly Upward

By late afternoon, Jim and Eddie had left the lake far behind and were pacing over seemingly endless broad, flat swatches of high grass. Here and there a gentle rise reared up into a high hill topped with black rocks. Eddie was exhausted from staggering up and down the hills, one after another, his boots slipping on the damp grass as if it were greased marble. By the time they left the fields behind for a narrow dirt road, his hands were bleeding and grass-stained.

Jim stalked ahead of him with determined strides. Occasionally he would point out items of interest in a somber voice, like the world's most depressed tour guide. "We just crossed Brocelind Plain," he said as they climbed a rise and saw a tangled expanse of dark trees stretching away toward the west, where the sun hung low in the sky. "This is the forest. The woods used to cover most of the lowland of the country. Much of it was cut down to make way for the city—and to clear out the wolf packs and vampire nests that tended to crop up there. Brocelind Forest has always been a hiding place for Downworlders."

They trudged along in silence as the road curved alongside the forest for several miles before taking an abrupt turn. The trees seemed to lift away as a ridge rose above them, and Eddie blinked when they turned the corner of a high hill—unless his eyes were deceiving him, here were houses down there. Small, white rows of houses, orderly as a Munchkin village. "We're here!" Eddie exclaimed, and darted forward, only stopping when he realized that Jim was no longer beside him.

Eddie turned and saw him standing in the middle of the dusty road, shaking his head. "No," he said, moving to catch up with him. "That's not the city."

"Then is it a town? You said there weren't any towns near here—"

"It's a graveyard. It's Alicante's City of Bones. Did you think the City of Bones was the only resting place we had?" He sounded sad. "This is the necropolis, the place we bury those who die in Derry. You'll see. We have to walk through it to get to Alicante."

Eddie hadn't been to a graveyard since the night Stan had died, and the memory gave him a bone-deep shiver as he passed along the narrow lanes that threaded among the mausoleums like white ribbon. Someone took care of this place: The marble gleamed as if freshly scrubbed, and the grass was evenly cut. There were bunches of white flowers laid here and there on the graves; he thought at first they were lilies, but they had a spicy, unfamiliar scent that made him wonder if they were native to Derry. Each tomb looked like a little house; some even had metal or wire gates, and the names of Shadowhunter families were carved over the doors. CARTWRIGHT. MERRYWEATHER. HIGHTOWER. HAGARTY. MIDWINTER. He stopped at one: BYERS.

Eddie turned to Jim. "That was the Inquisitor's name."

"This is her family tomb. Look." He pointed. Beside the door were white letters cut into the gray marble. They were names. MARCUS BYERS. WILLIAM BYERS. They had both died in the same year. Much as Eddie had hated the Inquisitor, he felt something twist inside him, a pity he couldn't help. To lose your husband and your son, so close together ... Three words in Latin ran under Will's name: AVE ATQUE VALE.

"What does that mean?" he asked, turning to Jim.

"It means 'Hail and farewell.' It's from a poem by Catullus. At some point it became what the Nephilim say during funerals, or when someone dies in battle. Now come on—it's better not to dwell on this stuff, Eddie." Jim took his shoulder and moved him gently away from the tomb.

Maybe he is right, Eddie thought. *Maybe it is better not to think too much about death and dying right now.* He kept his eyes averted as they made their way out of the necropolis. They were almost through the iron gates at the far end when he spotted a smaller mausoleum, growing like a white toadstool in the shadow of a leafy oak tree. The name above the door leaped out at him as if it had been writing in light.

HENDERSON.

“Eddie—” Jim reached for him, but Eddie was already gone. With a sigh he followed him into the tree’s shadow, where Eddie stood transfixed, reading the names of the grandparents and great-grandparents he had never even known he had. DUSTIN HENDERSON. ADELE HENDERSON, B. KASPBRAK. GRANVILLE HENDERSON. And below all those names: SONIA GRAY, B. HENDERSON.

A wave of cold went over Eddie. Seeing his mother’s name there was like revisiting the nightmares he had sometimes where he was at his mother’s funeral and no one would tell him what had happened or how his mother had died.

“*Henderson?*” Eddie said. “I thought I was a Kaspbrak.”

“You are,” Jim assured him. “Your mom chose your grandmother’s last name to go unnoticed for a while.”

“It didn’t work,” Eddie crossed his arms around his chest. “*Eddie Henderson*. That sounds so weird now.”

“Don’t think too much of it. You’re a Kaspbrak.”

“But my mom’s not dead,” Eddie said, looking up at Jim. “She’s not —”

“The Grave didn’t know that,” Jim told him gently.

Eddie gasped. He could no longer hear Jim’s voice or see him standing in front of him. A black headstone loomed up in front of Eddie, letters cut unevenly into its face: EDWARD GRAY B. 2002 D. 2018. Under the words was a crudely drawn child’s sketch of a skull with gaping eye sockets. Eddie staggered backward with a scream.

Jim caught him by the shoulders. “Eddie, what is it? What’s wrong?”

He pointed. “There—look—”

But it was gone. The grass stretched out ahead of him, green and even, the white mausoleums neat and plain in their orderly rows.

Eddie twisted to look up at him. “I saw my own gravestone,” he said.

"It said I was going to die—now—this year." He shuddered.

Jim looked grim. "It's the lake water," he said. "You're starting to hallucinate. Come on—we haven't got much time left."

Richie marched Stan upstairs and down a short hallway lined with doors; he paused only to straight-arm one of them open, a scowl on his face. "In here," he said, half-shoving Stan through the doorway. Stan saw what looked like a library inside: rows of bookshelves, long couches, and armchairs. "We should have some privacy—"

He broke off as a figure rose nervously from one of the armchairs. It was a little boy with blonde hair and glasses. He had a small, serious face, and there was a book clutched in one of his hands. Stan was familiar enough with Eddie's reading habits to recognize it as a manga volume even at a distance.

Richie frowned. "Sorry, Georgie. We need the room. Grown-up talk."

"But Ben and Bill already kicked me out of the living room so they could have grown-up talk," Georgie complained. "Where am I supposed to go?"

Richie shrugged. "Your room?" He jerked a thumb toward the door. "Time to do your duty for your country, kiddo. Scram."

Looking aggrieved, Georgie stalked past them both, his book clutched to his chest. Stan felt a twinge of sympathy—it sucked to be old enough to want to know what was going on, but so young you were always dismissed. The boy shot him a look as he went past—a scared, suspicious glance. *That's the vampire*, his eyes said.

"Come on." Richie hustled Stan into the room, shutting and locking the door behind them. With the door closed the room was so dimly lit even Stan found it dark. It smelled like dust. Richie walked across the floor and threw open the curtains at the far end of the room, revealing a tall, single-paned picture window that gave out onto a view of the canal just outside. Water splashed against the side of the house just a few feet below them, under stone railings carved with a

weather-beaten design of runes and stars.

Richie turned to Stan with a scowl. "What the hell is your problem, vampire?"

"My problem? You're the one who practically dragged me out of there by my hair."

"Because you were about to tell them that Eddie never canceled his plans to come to Derry. You know what would happen then? They'd contact him and arrange for him to come. And I already told you why that can't happen."

Stan shook his head. "I don't get you," he said. "Sometimes you act like all you care about is Eddie, and then you act like—"

Richie stared at him. The air was full of dancing dust motes; they made a shimmering curtain between the two boys. "Act like what?"

"You were flirting with Max," Stan said. "It didn't seem like all you cared about was Eddie then."

"That is so not your business," Richie said. "And besides, Eddie and I are just friends. You do know that."

"I was there in the faerie court too," Stan replied. "I remember what the Seelie Queen said. The kiss that will free the boy is the kiss that he most desires."

"I bet you remember that. Burned into your brain, is it, vampire?"

Stan made a noise in the back of his throat that he hadn't even realized he was capable of making. "Oh, no you don't. I'm not having this argument. I'm not fighting over Eddie with you. It's ridiculous."

"Then why did you bring all this up?"

"Because," Stan said. "If you want me to lie—not to Eddie, but to all your Shadowhunter friends—if you want me to pretend that it was Eddie's own decision not to come here, and if you want me to pretend that I don't know about his powers, or what he can really do, then you have to do something for me."

“Fine,” Richie said. “What is it you want?”

Stan was silent for a moment, looking past Richie at the line of stone houses fronting the sparkling canal. Past their crenellated roofs he could see the gleaming tops of the demon towers. “I want you to do whatever you need to do to convince Eddie that you don’t have feelings for him. And don’t—don’t tell me you’re only his friend; that’s bullcrap. Stop stringing him along. And I’m not saying this because I want him for myself. I’m saying it because I’m his friend and I don’t want him hurt.”

Richie looked down at his hands for a long moment without answering. They were thin hands, the fingers and knuckles scuffed with old calluses. The backs of them were laced with the thin white lines of old Marks. They were a soldier’s hands, not a teenage boy’s. “I’ve already done that,” he said. “I told him I was only interested in being friends.”

“Oh.” Stan had expected Richie to fight him on this, to argue, not to just *give up*. A Richie who just gave up was new—and left Stan feeling almost ashamed for having asked. *Eddie never mentioned it to me*, he wanted to say, but then why would he have? Come to think of it, Eddie had seemed unusually quiet and withdrawn lately whenever Richie’s name had come up. “Well, that takes care of that, I guess. There’s one last thing.”

“Oh?” Richie spoke without much apparent interest. “And what’s that?”

“What was it Pennywise said when Eddie drew that rune on the ship? It sounded like a foreign language. *Meme* something—?”

“*Mene mene tekel upharsin*,” Richie said with a faint smile. “You don’t recognize it? It’s from the Bible, vampire. The old one. That’s your book, isn’t it?”

“Just because I’m Jewish doesn’t mean I’ve memorized the Old Testament.”

“It’s the Writing on the Wall. ‘God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end; thou art weighed in the balance and found

wanting.' It's a portent of doom—it means the end of an empire."

"But what does that have to do with Pennywise?"

"Not just Pennywise," said Richie. "All of us. The Clave and the Law—what Eddie can do overturns everything they know to be true. No human being can create new runes, or draw the sort of runes Eddie can. Only angels have that power. And since Eddie can do that—well, it seems like a portent. Things are changing. The Laws are changing. The old ways may never be the right ways again. Just as the rebellion of the angels ended the world as it was—it split heaven in half and created hell—this could mean the end of the Nephilim as they currently exist. This is our war in heaven, vampire, and only one side can win it. And Pennywise means it to be his."

Though the air was still cold, Eddie was boiling hot in his wet clothes. Sweat ran down his face in rivulets, dampening the collar of his coat as Jim, his hand on Eddie's arm hurried him along the road under a rapidly darkening sky. They were within sight of Alicante now. The city was in a shallow valley, bisected by a silvery river that flowed into one end of the city, seemed to vanish, and flowed again out the other. A tumble of honey-colored buildings with red slate roofs and a tangle of steeply winding dark streets backed up against the side of a steep hill. On the crown of the hill rose a dark stone edifice, pillared and soaring, with a glittering tower at each cardinal direction point: four in all. Scattered among the other buildings were the same tall, thin, glasslike towers, each one shimmering like quartz. They were like glass needles piercing the sky. The fading sunlight struck dull rainbows from their surfaces like a match striking sparks. It was a beautiful sight, and very strange.

You have never seen a city until you have seen Alicante of the glass towers.

"What was that?" Jim said, overhearing. "What did you say?"

Eddie hadn't realized he'd spoken out loud. Embarrassed, he repeated his words, and Jim looked at him in surprise. "Where did you hear that?"

“Keene,” Eddie said. “It was something Keene said to me.”

Jim peered at him more closely. “You’re flushed,” he said. “How are you feeling?”

Eddie’s neck was aching, his whole body on fire, his mouth dry. “I’m fine,” he said. “Let’s just get there, okay?”

“Okay.” Jim pointed, at the edge of the city, where the buildings ended, Eddie could see an archway, two sides curving to a pointed top. A Shadowhunter in black gear stood watch inside the shadow of the archway. “That’s the North Gate—it’s where Downworlders can legally enter the city, provided they’ve got the paperwork. Guards are posted there night and day. Now, if we were on official business, or had permission to be here, we’d go in through it.”

“But there aren’t any walls around the city,” Eddie pointed out. “It doesn’t seem like much of a gate.”

“The wards are invisible, but they’re there. The demon towers control them. They have for a thousand years. You’ll feel it when you pass through them.” He glanced one more time at Eddie’s flushed face, concern crinkling the corners of his eyes. “Are you ready?”

Eddie nodded. They moved away from the gate, along the east side of the city, where buildings were more thickly clustered. With a gesture to be quiet, Jim drew him toward a narrow opening between two houses. Eddie shut his eyes as they approached, almost as if he expected to be smacked in the face with an invisible wall as soon as they stepped onto the streets of Alicante. It wasn’t like that. He felt a sudden pressure, as if he were in an airplane that was dropping. His ears popped—and then the feeling was gone, and he was standing in the alley between the buildings.

Just like an alley in New York—like every alley in the world, apparently—it smelled like cat pee.

Eddie peered around the corner of one of the buildings. A larger street stretched away up the hill, lined with small shops and houses. “There’s no one around,” he observed, with some surprise.

In the fading light Jim looked gray. “There must be a meeting going on up at the Gard. It’s the only thing that could get everyone off the streets at once.”

“But isn’t that good? There’s no one around to see us.”

“It’s good and bad. The streets are mostly deserted, which is good. But anyone who does happen by will be much more likely to notice and remark on us.”

“I thought you said everyone was at the Gard.”

Jim smiled faintly. “Don’t be so literal, Eddie. I meant most of the city. Children, teenagers, anyone exempted from the meeting, they won’t be there.”

Teenagers. Eddie thought of Richie, and, despite himself, his pulse leaped forward like a horse charging out of the starting gate at a race.

Jim frowned, almost as if he could read Eddie's thoughts. “As of now, I’m breaking the Law by being in Alicante without declaring myself to the Clave at the gate. If anyone recognizes me, we could be in real trouble.” He glanced up at the narrow strip of russet sky visible between the rooftops. “We have to get off the streets.”

“I thought we were going to your friend’s house.”

“We are. And she’s not a friend, precisely.”

“Then who—?”

“Just follow me.” Jim ducked into a passage between two houses, so narrow that Eddie could reach out and touch the walls of both houses with his fingers as they made their way down it and onto a cobblestoned winding street lined with shops. The buildings themselves looked like a cross between a Gothic dreamscape and a children’s fairy tale. The stone facings were carved with all manner of creatures out of myth and legend—the heads of monsters were a prominent feature, interspersed with winged horses, something that looked like a house on chicken legs, mermaids, and, of course, angels. Gargoyles jutted from every corner, their snarling faces contorted.

And everywhere there were runes: splashed across doors, hidden in the design of an abstract carving, dangling from thin metal chains like wind chimes that twisted in the breeze. Runes for protection, for good luck, even for good business; staring at them all, Eddie began to feel a little dizzy.

They walked in silence, keeping to the shadows. The cobblestone street was deserted, shop doors shut and barred. Eddie cast furtive glances into the windows as they passed. It was strange to see a display of expensive decorated chocolates in one window and in the next an equally lavish display of deadly-looking weapons—cutlasses, maces, nail-studded cudgels, and an array of seraph blades in different sizes. “No guns,” he said. His own voice sounded very far away.

Jim blinked at him. “What?”

“Shadowhunters,” Eddie said. “They never seem to use guns.”

“Runes keep gunpowder from igniting,” he said. “No one knows why. Still, Nephilim have been known to use the occasional rifle on lycanthropes. It doesn’t take a rune to kill us—just silver bullets.” His voice was grim. Suddenly his head went up. In the dim light it was easy to imagine his ears pricking forward like a wolf’s. “Voices,” he said. “They must be finished at the Gard.”

He took Eddie’s arm and pulled him sideways off the main street. They emerged into a small square with a well at its center. A masonry bridge arched over a narrow canal just ahead of them. In the fading light the water in the canal looked almost black. Eddie could hear the voices himself now, coming from the streets nearby. They were raised, angry-sounding. Eddie’s dizziness increased—he felt as if the ground were tilting under him, threatening to send him sprawling. He leaned back against the wall of the alley, gasping for air.

“Eddie,” Jim said. “Eddie, are you all right?”

His voice sounded thick, strange. Eddie looked at him, and the breath died in his throat. His ears had grown long and pointed, his teeth razor-sharp, his eyes a fierce yellow—

“Jim,” he whispered. “What’s happening to you?”

“Eddie.” Jim reached for him, his hands oddly elongated, the nails sharp and rust-colored. “Is something wrong?”

Eddie screamed, twisting away from him. He wasn’t sure why he felt so terrified—he’d seen Jim Change before, and he’d never harmed him. But the terror was a live thing inside him, uncontrollable. Jim caught at Eddie’s shoulders and Eddie cringed away from him, away from his yellow, animal eyes, even as he hushed him, begging him to be quiet in his ordinary, human voice. “Eddie, please—”

“Let me go! Let me go!”

But he didn’t. “It’s the water—you’re hallucinating—Eddie, try to keep it together.” Jim drew him toward the bridge, half-dragging him. Eddie could feel tears running down his face, cooling his burning cheeks. “It’s not real. Try to hold on, please,” Jim said, helping him onto the bridge. Eddie could smell the water below it, green and stale. Things moved below the surface of it. As Eddie watched, a black tentacle emerged from the water, its spongy tip lined with needle teeth. He cringed away from the water, unable to scream, a low moaning coming from his throat.

Jim caught him as Eddie’s knees buckled, swinging him up into his arms. Jim hadn’t carried him since he was five or six years old. “Eddie,” he said, but the rest of his words melded and blurred into a nonsensical roar as they stepped down off the bridge. They raced past a series of tall, thin houses that almost reminded Eddie of Brooklyn row houses—or maybe he was just hallucinating his own neighborhood? The air around them seemed to warp as they went on, the lights of the houses blazing up around them like torches, the canal shimmering with an evil phosphorescent glow. Eddie’s bones felt as if they were dissolving inside his body.

“Here.” Jim jerked to a halt in front of a tall canal house. He kicked hard at the door, shouting; it was painted a bright, almost garish, red, a single rune splashed across it in gold. The rune melted and ran as Eddie stared at it, taking the shape of a hideous grinning skull. It’s not real, he told himself fiercely, stifling his scream with his fist, biting down until he tasted blood in his mouth.

The pain cleared his head momentarily. The door flew open, revealing a woman in a dark dress, her face creased with a mixture of anger and surprise. Her hair was long, a tangled gray-brown cloud escaping from two braids; her blue eyes were familiar. A witchlight rune-stone gleamed in her hand. "Who is it?" she demanded. "What do you want?"

"Amatis." Jim moved into the pool of witchlight, Eddie in his arms. "It's me."

The woman blanched and tottered, putting out a hand to brace herself against the doorway. "*Jimothy?*" Jim tried to take a step forward, but the woman—Amatis—blocked his path. She was shaking her head so hard that her braids whipped back and forth. "How can you come here, Jimothy? How *dare* you come here?"

"I had very little choice." Jim tightened his hold on Eddie. He bit back a cry. His whole body felt as if it were on fire, every nerve ending burning with pain.

"You have to go, then," Amatis said. "If you leave immediately—"

"I'm not here for me. I'm here for the boy. He's dying." As the woman stared at him, he said, "Amatis, please. He's Sonia's son."

There was a long silence, during which Amatis stood like a statue, unmoving, in the doorway. She seemed frozen, whether from surprise or horror, Eddie couldn't guess. Eddie clenched his fist—his palm was sticky with blood where the nails dug in—but even the pain wasn't helping now; the world was coming apart in soft colors, like a jigsaw puzzle drifting on the surface of water. He barely heard Amatis's voice as the older woman stepped back from the doorway and said, "Very well, Jimothy. You can bring him inside."

By the time Stan and Richie came back into the living room, Max had laid food out on the low table between the couches. There were bread and cheese, slices of cake, apples, and even a bottle of wine, which Georgie was not allowed to touch. He sat in the corner with a plate of cake, his book open on his lap. Stan sympathized with him. He felt

just as alone in the laughing, chatting group as Georgie probably did.

He watched Max touch Richie's wrist with her fingers as she reached for a piece of apple, and felt himself tense. *But this is what you want him to do*, he told himself, and yet somehow he couldn't get rid of the sense that Eddie was being disregarded.

Richie met his eyes over Max's head and smiled. Somehow, even though he wasn't a vampire, he was able to manage a smile that seemed to be all pointed teeth. Stan looked away, glancing around the room. He noticed that the music he'd heard earlier wasn't coming from a stereo at all but from a complicated-looking mechanical contraption.

"We're out of wine," Ben declared, setting the bottle down on the table with a thump. "I'm going to get some more." He disappeared into the kitchen.

"If you don't mind my saying so, you seem a little quiet." It was Henry, leaning over the back of Stan's chair with a disarming smile. For someone with such dark hair, Stan thought, Henry's skin was very fair, as if he didn't go out in the sun much. "Everything all right?"

Stan shrugged. "There aren't a lot of openings for me in the conversation. It seems to be either about Shadowhunter politics or people I've never heard of, or both."

The smile disappeared. "We can be something of a closed circle, we Nephilim. It's the way of those who are shut out from the rest of the world."

"Don't you think you shut yourselves out? You despise ordinary humans—"

"'Despise' is a little strong," said Henry. "And do you really think the world of humans would want anything to do with us? All we are is a living reminder that whenever they comfort themselves that there are no real vampires, no real demons or monsters under the bed—they're lying." He turned his head to look at Richie, who, Stan realized, had been staring at them both in silence for several minutes. "Don't you

agree?”

Richie smiled. “De ce crezi că vă ascultam conversatia?”

Henry met his glance with a look of pleasant interest. “M-ai urmărit de când ai ajuns aici,” he replied. “Nu-mi dau seama dacă nu mă placi ori dacă ești atât de bănuitor cu toată lumea.” He got to his feet. “I appreciate the Romanian practice, but if you don’t mind, I’m going to see what’s taking Ben so long in the kitchen.” He disappeared through the doorway, leaving Richie staring after him with a puzzled expression.

“What’s wrong? Does he not speak Romanian after all?” Stan asked.

“No,” said Richie. A small frown line had appeared between his eyes. “No, he speaks it all right.”

Before Stan could ask him what he meant by that, Bill entered the room. He was frowning, just as he had been when he’d left. His gaze lingered momentarily on Stan, a look almost of confusion in his blue eyes.

Richie glanced up. “Back so soon?”

“Not for long.” Bill reached down to pluck an apple off the table with a gloved hand. “I just came back to get—him,” he said, gesturing toward Stan with the apple. “H-he’s wanted at the Gard.”

Max looked surprised. “Really?” she said, but Richie was already rising from the couch, disentangling his hand from hers.

“Wanted for what?” he said, with a dangerous calm. “I hope you found that out before you promised to deliver him, at least.”

“Of course I asked,” Bill snapped. “I’m not stupid.”

“Oh, come on,” said Ben. He had reappeared in the doorway with Henry, who was holding a bottle. “Sometimes you are a bit stupid, you know. Just a bit,” he repeated as Bill shot him a murderous glare.

“They’re sending Stan b-back to New York,” he said. “Through the Portal.”

“But he just got here!” Ben protested. “That’s no fun.”

“It’s not supposed to be fun, Ben. Stan c-coming here was an accident, so the Clave thinks the best thing is for him to g-go home.”

“Great,” Stan said. “Maybe I’ll even make it back before my mother notices I’m gone. What’s the time difference between here and Manhattan?”

“You have a *mother*?” Max looked amazed.

Stan chose to ignore this. “Seriously,” he said, as Bill and Richie exchanged glances. “It’s fine. All I want is to get out of this place.”

“You’ll go with him?” Richie said to Bill. “And make sure everything’s all right?”

They were looking at each other in a way that was familiar to Stan. It was the way he and Eddie and Beverly sometimes looked at each other, exchanging coded glances when they didn’t want their parents to know what they were planning.

“What?” he said, looking from one to the other. “What’s wrong?”

They broke their stare; Bill glanced away, and Richie turned a bland and smiling look on Stan. “Nothing,” he said. “Everything’s fine. Congratulations, vampire—you get to go home.”

Notes for the Chapter:

In case you didn't pick up on it. One of the gravestones said Dustin Henderson. My bae from ST. Just thought it would be nice to include him somehow, now you now he and Eddie were related. XD

5. Daylighter

Night had fallen over Alicante when Stan and Bill left the Mayfields' house and headed uphill toward the Gard. The streets of the city were narrow and twisting, wending upward like pale stone ribbons in the moonlight. The air was cold, though Stan felt it only distantly.

Bill walked along in silence, striding ahead of Stan as if pretending that he were alone. In his previous life Stan would have had to hurry, panting, to keep up; now he discovered he could pace Bill just by speeding up his stride. "Must suck," Stan said finally, as Bill stared morosely ahead. "Getting stuck with escorting me, I mean."

Bill shrugged. "I'm eighteen. I'm an adult, so I have to be the responsible one. I'm the only one who can go in and out of the Gard when the Clave's in session; and b-besides, the Consul knows me."

"What's a Consul?"

"He's like a very high officer of the Clave. He counts the v-votes of the Council, interprets the Law for the Clave, and advises them and the Inquisitor. If you head up an Institute and you run into a p-problem you don't know how to deal with, you call the Consul."

"He advises the Inquisitor? I thought—isn't the Inquisitor dead?"

Bill snorted. "That's like saying, 'Isn't the president dead?' Yeah, the Inquisitor died; n-now there's a new one. Inquisitor Brenner."

Stan glanced down the hill toward the dark water of the canals far below. They'd left the city behind them and were treading a narrow road between shadowy trees. "I'll tell you, inquisitions haven't worked out well for my people in the past." Bill looked blank. "Never mind. Just a mundane history joke. You wouldn't be interested."

"You're not a m-mundane," Bill pointed out. "That's why Max and Henry were so excited to g-get a look at you. Not that you can tell with Henry; he always acts like he's s-seen everything already."

Stan spoke without thinking. "Are he and Ben ... Is there something

going on there?”

That startled a laugh out of Bill. “Ben and *Henry*? Hardly. Henry’s a nice guy—but Ben has m-made it clear that he doesn’t like guys.” Stan nodded slowly. “I think he does it for attention,” Bill continued. “With everything that happened with Pennywise, he m-might want to go back to normal.”

“Or maybe he’s trying to take the attention off you,” Stan said, almost absently. “You know, since your parents don’t know you’re gay and all.”

Bill stopped in the middle of the road so suddenly that Stan almost crashed into him. “No,” he said, “but apparently everyone *else* does.”

“Except Richie,” Stan said. “He doesn’t know, does he?”

Bill took a deep breath. He was pale, Stan thought, or it could have just been the moonlight, washing the color out of everything. His eyes looked black in the darkness. “I really don’t see what b-business it is of yours. Unless you’re trying to threaten me.”

“Trying to *threaten* you?” Stan was taken aback. “I’m not—”

“Then why?” said Bill, and there was a sudden, sharp vulnerability in his voice that took Stan aback. “W-why bring it up?”

“Because,” Stan said. “You seem to hate me most of the time. I don’t take it that personally, even if I did save your life. You seem to kind of hate the whole world. And besides, we have practically nothing in common. But I see you looking at Richie, and I see myself looking at Eddie, and I figure—maybe we have that one thing in common. And maybe it might make you dislike me a little less.”

“So you’re not g-going to tell Richie?” Bill said. “I mean—you told Eddie how you felt, and ...”

“And it wasn’t the best idea,” said Stan. “Now I wonder all the time how you go back after something like that. Whether we can ever be friends again, or if what we had is broken into pieces. Not because of him, but because of me. Maybe if I found someone else...”

"Someone else," Bill repeated. He had started walking again, very quickly, staring at the road ahead of him.

Stan hurried to keep up. "You know what I mean. I think someday you'll meet someone new who can understand you, you know. Someone who's just as moody as you." He tried to smile, but Bill didn't.

"Thanks for the advice." Bill's voice was dry. "But I don't t-think the romance thing is for me."

"Oh, come on. There *has* to be someone. Isn't there a nice gay Shadowhunter you would like?"

Bill frowned. "I don't think so."

"A Downworlder maybe?" Stan suggested.

"It doesn't m-matter, anyway." His tone was abrupt. "We're here. This is the Gard."

A high wall rose in front of them, set with a pair of enormous gates. The gates were carved with the swirling, angular patterns of runes, and though Stan couldn't read them as Eddie could, there was something dazzling in their complexity and the sense of power that emanated from them. The gates were guarded by stone angel statues on either side, their faces fierce and beautiful. Each held a carved sword in its hand, and a writhing creature—a mixture of rat, bat, and lizard, with nasty pointed teeth—lay dying at its feet. Stan stood looking at them for a long moment. Demons, he figured—but they could just as easily be vampires. Bill pushed the gates open and gestured for Stan to pass through.

Once inside, he blinked around in confusion. Since he'd become a vampire, his night vision had sharpened to a laserlike clarity, but the dozens of torches lining the path to the doors of the Gard were made of witchlight, and the harsh white glow seemed to bleach the detail out of everything. He was vaguely aware of Bill guiding him forward down a narrow stone pathway that shone with reflected illumination, and then there was someone standing on the path in front of him, blocking his way with an upraised arm.

“So this is the vampire?” The voice that spoke was deep enough to nearly be a growl. Stan looked up, the light stinging his eyes to burning—they would have teared up if he’d still been able to shed tears. *Witchlight*, he thought, *angel light, burns me. I suppose it’s no surprise.*

The man standing in front of them was very tall, with sallow skin stretched over prominent cheekbones. Under a close-cropped dome of black hair, his forehead was high, his nose beaked and Roman. His expression as he looked down at Stan was the look of a subway commuter watching a large rat run back and forth on the rails, half-hoping a train will come along and squish it.

“This is Stan,” said Bill, a little uncertainly. “Stan, this is Consul Malachi Dieudonné. Is the Portal ready, sir?”

“Yes,” Malachi said. His voice was harsh and carried a faint accent. “Everything is in readiness. Come, Downworlder.” He beckoned to Stan. “The sooner this is all over, the better.”

Stan moved to go to the chief officer, but Bill stopped him with a hand on his arm. “J-just a moment,” he said, addressing the Consul. “He’ll be sent directly back to Manhattan? And there will be someone waiting there on the other side for him?”

“Indeed,” said Malachi. “The warlock Jane Ives. Since she unwisely allowed the vampire into Derry in the first place, she’s taken responsibility for his return.”

“If she hadn’t let Stan through the Portal, he would have died,” Bill said, a little sharply.

“Perhaps,” said Malachi. “That’s what your parents say, and the Clave has chosen to believe them. Against my advice, in fact. Still, one does not lightly bring Downworlders into the City of Glass.”

“There was nothing light about it.” Anger surged in Stan’s chest. “We were under attack—”

Malachi turned his gaze on Stan. “You will speak when you are spoken to, Downworlder, not before.”

Bill's hand tightened on Stan's arm. There was a look on his face—half hesitation, half suspicion, as if he was doubting his wisdom in bringing Stan here after all.

“Now, Consul, *really!*” The voice carrying through the courtyard was high, a little breathless, and Stan saw with some surprise that it belonged to a man—a small, round man hurrying along the path toward them. He was wearing a loose gray cloak over his Shadowhunter gear, and his bald head glistened in the witchlight. “There's no need to alarm our guest.”

“Guest?” Malachi looked outraged.

The small man came to a halt before Bill and Stan and beamed at them both. “We're so glad—pleased, really—that you decided to cooperate with our request that you return to New York. It does make everything so much easier.” He twinkled at Stan, who stared back at him in confusion. He didn't think he'd ever met a Shadowhunter who seemed pleased to see him—not when he was a mundane, and definitely not now that he was a vampire. “Oh, I almost forgot!” The little man slapped himself on the forehead in remorse. “I should have introduced myself. I'm the Inquisitor—the new Inquisitor. Inquisitor Brenner is my name.” Brenner held his hand out to Stan, and in a welter of confusion Stan took it. “And you. Your name is Stan?”

“Yes,” Stan said, drawing his hand back as soon as he could. Brenner's grip was unpleasantly moist and clammy. “There's no need to thank me for cooperating. All I want is to go home.”

“I'm sure you do, I'm sure you do!” Though Brenner's tone was jovial, something flashed across his face as he spoke—an expression Stan couldn't pin down. It was gone in a moment, as Brenner smiled and gestured toward a narrow path that wound alongside the Gard. “This way, Stan, if you please.”

Stan moved forward, and Bill made as if to follow him. The Inquisitor held up a hand. “That's all we'll be needing from you, William. Thank you for your help.”

“But Stan—” Bill began.

“Will be just fine,” the Inquisitor assured him. “Malachi, please show William out. And give him a witchlight rune-stone to get him back home if he hasn’t brought one. The path can be tricky at night.”

And with another beatific smile, he whisked Stan away, leaving Bill staring after them both.

The world flared up around Eddie in an almost tangible blur as Jim carried him over the threshold of the house and down a long hallway, Amatis hurrying ahead of them with her witchlight. More than half-delirious, he stared as the corridor unfolded before him, growing longer and longer like a corridor in a nightmare. The world turned on its side. Suddenly he was lying on a cold surface, and hands were smoothing a blanket over him. Blue eyes gazed down at him. “He seems so ill, Jimothy,” Amatis said, in a voice that was warped and distorted like an old recording. “What happened to him?”

“He drank about half of Lake Lyn.” The sound of Jim’s voice faded, and for a moment Eddie’s vision cleared: He was lying on the cold tiled floor of a kitchen, and somewhere above his head Jim was rummaging in a cabinet. The kitchen had peeling yellow walls and an old-fashioned black cast-iron stove against one wall; flames leaped behind the stove grating, making his eyes hurt. “Anise, belladonna, hellebore ...” Jim turned away from the cabinet with an armful of glass canisters. “Can you boil these together, Amatis? I’m going to move him closer to the stove. He’s shivering.”

Eddie tried to speak, to say that he didn’t need to be warmed, that he was burning up, but the sounds that came out of his mouth weren’t the ones he’d intended. He heard himself whimper as Jim lifted him, and then there was heat, thawing his left side—he hadn’t even realized he was cold. His teeth clicked together hard, and he tasted blood in his mouth. The world began to tremble around him like water shaken in a glass.

“The Lake of Dreams?” Amatis’s voice was full of disbelief. Eddie couldn’t see her clearly, but she seemed to be standing near the stove, a long-handled wooden spoon in her hand. “What were you doing there? Does Sonia know where—”

And the world was gone, or at least the real world, the kitchen with the yellow walls and the comforting fire behind the grate. Instead he saw the waters of Lake Lyn, with fire reflected in them as if in the surface of a piece of polished glass. Angels were walking on the glass—angels with white wings that hung bloodied and broken from their backs, and each of them had Richie's face. And then there were other angels, with wings of black shadow, and they touched their hands to the fire and laughed....

"He keeps calling out for his brother." Amatis's voice sounded hollow, as if filtering down from impossibly high overhead. "He's with the Denbroughs, isn't he? They're staying with the Mayfields on Princewater Street. I could—"

"No," Jim said sharply. "No. It's better Ben doesn't know about this."

Was I calling out for Ben? Why would I do that? Eddie wondered, but the thought was short-lived; the darkness came back, and the hallucinations claimed him again. This time he dreamed of Bill and Ben both looked as if they'd been through a fierce battle, their faces streaked with grime and tears. Then they were gone, and he dreamed of a faceless man with black wings sprouting from his back like a bat's. Blood ran from his mouth when he smiled. Praying that the visions would vanish, Eddie squeezed his eyes shut...

It was a long time before he surfaced again to the sound of voices above him. "Drink this," Jim said. "Eddie, you have to drink this," and then there were hands on his back and fluid was being dripped into his mouth from a soaked rag. It tasted bitter and awful and he choked and gagged on it, but the hands on his back were firm. Eddie swallowed, past the pain in his swollen throat. "There," said Jim. "There, that should be better."

Eddie opened his eyes slowly. Kneeling beside her were Jim and Amatis, their nearly identically blue eyes filled with matching concern. He glanced behind them and saw nothing—no angels or devils with bat wings, only yellow walls and a pale pink teakettle balanced precariously on a windowsill. "Am I going to die?" he whispered.

Jim smiled haggardly. "No. It'll be a little while before you're back

on form, but—you'll survive."

"Okay." Eddie was too exhausted to feel much of anything, even relief. It felt as if all his bones had been removed, leaving a limp suit of skin behind. Looking up drowsily through his eyelashes, he said, almost without thinking, "Your eyes are the same."

Jim blinked. "The same as what?"

"As hers," Eddie said, moving his sleepy gaze to Amatis, who looked perplexed. "The same blue."

The ghost of a smile passed over Jim's face. "Well, it's not that surprising, considering," he said. "I didn't get a chance to introduce you properly before. Eddie, this is Amatis Byers. My sister."

The Inquisitor fell silent the moment Bill and the chief officer were out of earshot. Stan followed him up the narrow witch-lit path, trying not to squint into the light. He was aware of the Gard rising up around him like the side of a ship rising up out of the ocean; lights blazed from its windows, staining the sky with a silvery light. There were low windows too, set at ground level. Several were barred, and there was only darkness within.

At length they reached a wooden door set into an archway at the side of the building. Brenner moved to free the lock, and Stan's stomach tightened. People, he'd noticed since he'd become a vampire, had a scent around them that changed with their moods. The Inquisitor stank of something bitter and strong as coffee, but much more unpleasant. Stan felt the prickling pain in his jaw that meant that his fang teeth wanted to come out, and shrank back from the Inquisitor as he passed through the door.

The hallway beyond was long and white, almost tunnel-like, as if it had been carved out of white rock. The Inquisitor hurried along, his witchlight bouncing brightly off the walls. For such a short-legged man he moved remarkably fast, turning his head from side to side as he went, his nose wrinkling as if he were smelling the air. Stan had to hurry to keep pace as they passed a set of huge double doors, thrown

wide open like wings. In the room beyond, Stan could see an amphitheater with row upon row of chairs in it, each one occupied by a black-clad Shadowhunter. Voices echoed off the walls, many raised in anger, and Stan caught snatches of the conversation as he passed, the words blurring as the speakers overlapped each other.

“But we have no proof of what Pennywise wants. He has communicated his wishes to no one—”

“What does it matter what he wants? He’s a renegade and a liar; do you really think any attempt to appease him would benefit us in the end?”

“You know a patrol found the dead body of a werewolf child on the outskirts of Brocelind? Drained of blood. It looks like Pennywise’s completed the Ritual here in Derry.”

“With two of the Mortal Instruments in his possession, he’s more powerful than any one Nephilim has a right to be. We may have no choice—”

“My cousin died on that ship in New York. There’s no way we’re letting Pennywise get away with what he’s already done. There must be retribution!”

Stan hesitated, curious to hear more, but the Inquisitor was buzzing around him like a fat, irritable bee. “Come along, come along,” he said, swinging his witchlight in front of him. “We don’t have a lot of time to waste. I should get back to the meeting before it ends.”

Reluctantly, Stan allowed the Inquisitor to push him along the corridor, the word “retribution” still ringing in his ears. The reminder of that night on the ship was cold, unpleasant. When they reached a door carved with a single stark black rune, the Inquisitor produced a key and unlocked it, ushering Stan inside with a broad gesture of welcome.

The room beyond was bare, decorated with a single tapestry that showed an angel rising out of a lake, clutching a sword in one hand and a cup in the other. The fact that he’d seen both the Cup and the Sword before momentarily distracted Stan. It wasn’t until he heard

the click of a lock sliding home that he realized the Inquisitor had bolted the door behind him, locking them both in.

Stan glanced around. There was no furniture in the room besides a bench with a low table beside it. A decorative silver bell rested on the table. "The Portal ... It's in here?" he asked uncertainly.

"Stan, Stan." Brenner rubbed his hands together as if anticipating a birthday party or some other delightful event. "Are you really in such a hurry to leave? There are a few questions I had so hoped to ask you first...."

"Okay." Stan shrugged uncomfortably. "Ask me whatever you want, I guess."

"How very cooperative of you! How delightful!" Brenner beamed. "So, how long is it exactly that you've been a vampire?"

"About two weeks."

"And how did it happen? Were you attacked on the street, or perhaps in your bed at night? Do you know who it was who Turned you?"

"Well—not exactly."

"But, my boy!" Brenner cried. "How could you not know something like that?" The look he bent on Stan was open and curious. He seemed so harmless, Stan thought. Like someone's grandfather or funny old uncle. Stan must have imagined the bitter smell.

"It really wasn't that simple," said Stan, and went on to explain about his two trips to the Dumort, his kidnapping and the second under a compulsion so strong it had felt like a giant set of pincers holding him in their grasp and marching him exactly where they wanted him to go. "And so you see," he finished, "the moment I walked in the door of the hotel, I was attacked—I don't know which of them it was who Turned me, or if it was all of them somehow."

The Inquisitor clucked. "Oh dear, oh dear. That's not good at all. That's very upsetting."

"I certainly thought so," Stan agreed.

"The Clave won't be pleased."

"What?" Stan was baffled. "What does the Clave care how I became a vampire?"

"Well, it would be one thing if you were attacked," Brenner said apologetically. "But you just walked out there and, well, gave yourself up to the vampires, you see? It looks a bit as if you *wanted* to be one."

"I didn't want to be one! That's not why I went to the hotel!"

"Of course, of course." Brenner's voice was soothing. "Let's move to another topic, shall we?" Without waiting for a response, he went on. "How is it that the vampires let you survive to rise again, young Stan? Considering that you trespassed on their territory, their normal procedure would have been to feed until you died, and then burn your body to prevent you from rising."

Stan opened his mouth to reply, to tell the Inquisitor how Adrian had taken him to the Institute, and how Eddie and Richie and Ben had brought him to the cemetery and watched over him as he'd dug his way out of his own grave. Then he hesitated. He had only the vaguest idea how the Law worked, but he doubted somehow that it was standard Shadowhunter procedure to watch over vampires as they rose, or to provide them with blood for their first feeding. "I don't know," he said. "I have no idea why they Turned me instead of killing me."

"But one of them must have let you drink his blood, or you wouldn't be ... well, what you are today. Are you saying you don't know who your vampire sire was?"

My vampire sire? Stan had never thought of it that way—he'd gotten Adrian's blood in his mouth almost by accident. And it was hard to think of the vampire boy as a sire of any sort. Adrian looked younger than Stan did. "I'm afraid not."

"Oh, dear." The Inquisitor sighed. "Most unfortunate."

"What's unfortunate?"

“Well, that you’re lying to me, my boy.” Brenner shook his head. “And I had so hoped you’d cooperate. This is terrible, just terrible. You wouldn’t *consider* telling me the truth? Just as a favor?”

“I am telling you the truth!”

The Inquisitor drooped like an unwatered flower. “Such a shame.” He sighed again. “Such a shame.” He crossed the room then and rapped sharply on the door, still shaking his head.

“What’s going on?” Alarm and confusion tinged Stan’s voice. “What about the Portal?”

“The Portal?” Brenner giggled. “You didn’t really think I was just going to let you go, did you?”

Before Stan could say a word in reply, the door burst open and Shadowhunters in black gear poured into the room, seizing hold of him. He struggled as strong hands clamped themselves around each of his arms. A hood was tugged down over his head, blinding him. He kicked out at the darkness; his foot connected, and he heard someone swear.

He was jerked backward viciously; a hot voice snarled in his ear. “Do that again, vampire, and I’ll pour holy water down your throat and watch you die puking blood.”

“That’s enough!” The Inquisitor’s thin, worried voice rose like a balloon. “There will be no more threats! I’m just trying to teach our guest a lesson.” He must have moved forward, because Stan smelled the strange, bitter smell again, muffled through the hood. “Stan, Stan,” Brenner said. “I did so enjoy meeting you. I hope a night in the cells of the Gard will have the desired effect and in the morning you’ll be a bit more cooperative. I do still see such a bright future for us, once we get over this little hiccup.” His hand came down on Stan’s shoulder. “Take him downstairs, Nephilim.”

Stan yelled aloud, but his cries were muffled by the hood. The Shadowhunters dragged him from the room and propelled him down what felt like an endless series of mazelike corridors, twisting and turning. Eventually they reached a set of stairs and he was shoved

down it by main force, his feet slipping on the steps. He couldn't tell anything about where they were—except that there was a close, dark smell around them, like wet stone, and that the air was growing wetter and colder as they descended.

At last they paused. There was a scraping sound, like iron dragging over stone, and Stan was thrown forward to land on his hands and knees on hard ground. There was a loud, metallic clang, as of a door being slammed shut, and the sound of retreating footsteps, the echo of boots on stone growing fainter as Stan staggered to his feet. He dragged the hood from his head and threw it to the ground. The close, hot, suffocating feeling around his face vanished, and he fought the urge to gasp for breath—breath he didn't need. He knew it was just a reflex, but his chest ached as if he'd really been deprived of air.

He was in a square barren stone room, with just a single barred window set into the wall above the small, hard-looking bed. Through a low door Stan could see a tiny bathroom with a sink and toilet. The west wall of the room was also barred—thick, iron-looking bars running from floor to ceiling, sunk deeply into the floor. A hinged iron door, made of bars itself, was set into the wall; it was fitted with a brass knob, which was carved across its face with a dense black rune. In fact, all the bars were carved with runes; even the window bars were wrapped with spidery lines of them.

Though he knew the cell door must be locked, Stan couldn't help himself; he strode across the floor and seized the knob. A searing pain shot through his hand. He yelled and jerked his arm back, staring. Thin wisps of smoke rose from his burned palm; an intricate design had been charred into the skin. It looked a little like a Star of David inside a circle, with delicate runes drawn in each of the hollow spaces between the lines.

The pain felt like white heat. Stan curled his hand in on itself as a gasp rose to his lips. "What is this?" he whispered, knowing no one could hear him.

"It's the Seal of Solomon," said a voice. "It contains, they claim, one of the True Names of God. It repels demons—and your kind as well, being an article of your faith."

Stan jerked upright, half-forgetting the pain in his hand. “Who’s there? Who said that?”

There was a pause. Then, “I’m in the cell next to yours, Daylighter,” said the voice. It was male, adult, slightly hoarse. “The guards were here half the day talking about how to keep you penned in. So I wouldn’t bother trying to get it open. You’re better off saving your strength till you find out what the Clave wants from you.”

“They can’t hold me here,” Stan protested. “I don’t belong to this world. My family will notice I’m missing—my teachers—”

“They’ve taken care of that. There are simple enough spells—a beginning warlock could use them—that will supply your parents with the illusion that there’s a perfectly legitimate reason for your absence. A school trip. A visit to family. It can be done.” There was no threat in the voice, and no sorrow; it was matter-of-fact. “Do you really think they’ve never made a Downworlder disappear before?”

“Who are you?” Stan’s voice cracked. “Are you a Downworlder too? Is this where they keep us?”

This time there was no answer. Stan called out again, but his neighbor had evidently decided that he’d said all he wanted to say. Nothing answered Stan’s cries but silence.

The pain in his hand had faded. Looking down, Stan saw that the skin no longer looked burned, but the mark of the Seal was printed on his palm as if it had been drawn there in ink. He looked back at the cell bars. He realized now that not all the runes were runes at all: Carved between them were Stars of David and lines from the Torah in Hebrew. The carvings looked new.

The guards were here half the day talking about how to keep you penned in, the voice had said.

But it hadn’t just been because he was a vampire, laughably; it had partly been because he was Jewish. They had spent half the day carving the Seal of Solomon into that doorknob so it would burn him when he touched it. It had taken them this long to turn the articles of his faith against him.

For some reason the realization stripped away the last of Stan's self-possession. He sank down onto the bed and put his head in his hands.

Princewater Street was dark when Bill returned from the Gard, the windows of the houses shuttered and shaded, only the occasional witchlight streetlamp casting a pool of white illumination onto the cobblestones. The Mayfields' house was the brightest on the block—candles glowed in the windows, and the front door was slightly ajar, letting a slice of yellow light out to curve along the walkway.

Richie was sitting on the low stone wall that bordered the Mayfields' front garden, his hair very bright under the light of the nearest streetlamp. He looked up as Bill approached, and shivered a little. He was wearing only a light jacket, Bill saw, and it had grown cold since the sun had gone down. The smell of late roses hung in the chilly air like thin perfume.

Bill sank down onto the wall beside Richie. "Have you been out here w-waiting for me all this time?"

"Who says I'm waiting for you?"

"It went fine, if that's what you were worried about. I left Stan w-with the Inquisitor."

"You *left* him? You didn't stay to make sure everything went all right?"

"It was fine," Bill repeated. "The Inquisitor said he'd take him inside personally and send him back to—"

"The Inquisitor said, the Inquisitor said," Richie interrupted. "The last Inquisitor we met completely exceeded her command—if she hadn't died, the Clave would have relieved her of her position, maybe even cursed her. What's to say this Inquisitor isn't a nut job too?"

"He seemed all right," said Bill. "Nice, even. He w-was perfectly polite to San. Look, Richie—this is how the Clave works. We don't get to control everything that happens. But you have to t-trust them, because otherwise everything turns into chaos."

"But they've screwed up a lot recently—you have to admit that."

"Maybe," Bill said, "but if you start thinking you know b-better than the Clave and better than the Law, what makes you any better than the Inquisitor? Or Pennywise?"

A beam of bright yellow light cut across the garden suddenly. Bill looked up to see Ben framed in the open front door, light pouring out around him. He was only a silhouette, but Bill could tell from the hands on his hips that he was annoyed. "What are you two *doing* out here?" he called. "Everyone's wondering where you are."

Bill turned back to his friend. "Richie—"

But Richie, getting to his feet, ignored Bill's outstretched hand. "You'd better be right about the Clave," was all he said.

Bill watched as Richie stalked back to the house. Unbidden, Stan's voice came into his mind. *Now I wonder all the time how you go back after something like that. Whether we can ever be friends again, or if what we had is broken into pieces. Not because of him, but because of me.*

The front door shut, leaving Bill sitting in the half-lit garden, alone. He closed his eyes for a moment, the image of a face hovering behind his lids. Not Richie's face, for a change. The eyes set in his face were brown, with light brown hair.

You seem to hate me most of the time.

Bill closed his eyes again, truth was, he didn't hate Stan. He couldn't, even if he tried too.

Opening his eyes, he reached into his satchel and drew out a pen and a piece of paper, torn from the spiral-bound notebook he used as a journal. He wrote a few words on it, words he couldn't spoke out loud, and then, with his stele, traced the rune for fire at the bottom of the page. It went up faster than he'd thought it would; he let go of the paper as it burned, floating in midair like a firefly. Soon all that was left was a fine drift of ash, sifting like white powder across the rosebushes.

6. You Are Not On Your Own

Afternoon light woke Eddie, a beam of pale brightness that laid itself directly over his face, lighting the insides of his eyelids to hot pink. He stirred restlessly and warily opened his eyes.

The fever was gone, and so was the sense that his bones were melting and breaking inside him. He sat up and glanced around with curious eyes. He was in what had to be Amatis's spare room—it was small, white-painted, the bed covered with a brightly woven rag blanket. Lace curtains were drawn back over round windows, letting in circles of light. He sat up slowly, waiting for dizziness to wash over him. Nothing happened. He felt entirely healthy, even well rested. Getting out of bed, he looked down at himself. Someone had put him in a pair of starched white pajamas, though they were wrinkled now and too big for him; the sleeves hung down comically past his fingers.

He went to one of the circular windows and peered out. Stacked houses of old-gold stone rose up the side of a hill, and the roofs looked as if they had been shingled in bronze. This side of the house faced away from the canal, onto a narrow side garden turning brown and gold with autumn. A trellis crawled up the side of the house; a single last rose hung on it, drooping browning petals.

The doorknob rattled, and Eddie climbed hastily back into bed just before Amatis entered, holding a tray in her hands. She raised her eyebrows when she saw Eddie was awake, but said nothing.

"Where's Jim?" Eddie demanded, drawing the blanket close around himself for comfort.

Amatis set the tray down on the table beside the bed. There was a mug of something hot on it, and some slices of buttered bread. "You should eat something. You'll feel better."

"I feel fine," Eddie said. "Where's Jim?"

There was a high-backed chair beside the table; Amatis sat in it, folded her hands in her lap, and regarded Eddie calmly. In the daylight Eddie could see more clearly the lines in her face—she

looked older than Eddie's mother by many years, though they couldn't be that far apart in age. Her brown hair was stippled with gray, her eyes rimmed with dark pink, as if she had been crying. "He's not here."

"Not here like he just popped around the corner to the bodega for a six-pack of Diet Coke and a box of Krispy Kremes, or not here like ..."

"He left this morning, around dawn, after sitting up with you all night. As to his destination, he wasn't specific." Amatis's tone was dry, and if Eddie hadn't felt so wretched, he might have been amused to note that it made her sound much more like Jim. "When he lived here, before he left Derry, after he was ... Changed ... he led a wolf pack that made its home in Brocelind Forest. He said he was going back to them, but he wouldn't say why or for how long—only that he'd be back in a few days."

"He just ... left me here? Am I supposed to sit around and wait for him?"

"Well, he couldn't very well take you with him, could he?" Amatis asked. "And it won't be easy for you to get home. You broke the Law in coming here like you did, and the Clave won't overlook that, or be generous about letting you leave."

"I don't want to go home." Eddie tried to collect himself. "I came here to ... to meet someone. I have something to do."

"Jim told me," said Amatis. "Let me give you a piece of advice—you'll only find Kali Prasad if she wants to be found."

"But—"

"Edward." Amatis looked at him speculatively. "We're expecting an attack by Pennywise at any moment. Almost every Shadowhunter in Derry is here in the city, inside the wards. Staying in Alicante is the safest thing for you."

Eddie sat frozen. Rationally, Amatis's words made sense, but it didn't do much to quiet the voice inside him screaming that he couldn't wait. He had to find Kali Prasad *now*; he had to save his mother *now*;

he had to go *now*. He bit down on his panic and tried to speak casually. “Jim never told me he had a sister.”

“No,” Amatis said. “He wouldn’t have. We weren’t—close.”

“Jim said your last name was Byers,” Eddie said. “But that’s the Inquisitor’s last name. Isn’t it?”

“It was,” said Amatis, and her face tightened as if the words pained her. “She was my mother-in-law.”

What was it Jim had told Eddie about the Inquisitor? That she’d had a son, who’d married a woman with *undesirable family connections*. “You were married to Will Byers?”

Amatis looked surprised. “You know his name?”

“I do—Jim told me—but I thought his wife died. I thought that’s why the Inquisitor was so—” *Horrible*, he wanted to say, but it seemed cruel to say it. “Bitter,” he said at last.

Amatis reached for the mug she’d brought; her hand shook a little as she lifted it. “Yes, she did die. Killed herself. That was Holly—Will’s second wife. I was the first.”

“And you got divorced?”

“Something like that.” Amatis thrust the mug at Eddie. “Look, drink this. You have to put something in your stomach.”

Distracted, Eddie took the mug and swallowed a hot mouthful. The liquid inside was rich and salty—not tea, as he’d thought, but soup. “Okay,” he said. “So what happened?”

Amatis was gazing into the distance. “When Jim was—when what happened to Jim happened, Pennywise needed a new lieutenant. He chose Will—we had both recently joined the Circle. And when he chose Will, he decided that perhaps it wouldn’t be fitting for the wife of his closest friend and adviser to be someone whose brother was ...”

“A werewolf.”

“He used another word.” Amatis sounded bitter. “He convinced Will to annul our marriage and to find himself another wife, one that Pennywise had picked for him. Holly was so young—so completely obedient.”

“That’s horrible.”

Amatis shook her head with a brittle laugh. “It was a long time ago. Will was kind, I suppose—he gave me this house and moved back into the Byers manor with his parents and Holly. I never saw him again after that. I left the Circle, of course. They wouldn’t have wanted me anymore. The only one of them who still visited me was Sonia. She even told me when she went to see Jim....” She pushed her graying hair back behind her ears. “I heard about Will’s death days after it had happened. And Holly—I’d hated her, but I felt sorry for her then. She cut her wrists, they say—blood everywhere—” She took a deep breath. “I saw Joyce later at Will’s funeral, when they put his body into the Byers mausoleum. She didn’t even seem to recognize me. They made her the Inquisitor not long after that. The Clave felt there was no one else who would hunt down the former members of the Circle more ruthlessly than she would—and they were right. If she could have washed away her memories of Will in their blood, she would have.”

Eddie thought of the cold eyes of the Inquisitor, her narrow, hard stare, and tried to feel pity for her. “I think it made her crazy,” he said. “Really crazy. She was horrible to me—but mostly to Ben. It was like she wanted him dead.”

“That makes sense,” said Amatis. “You look like your mother, and your mother brought you up, but your brother—” She cocked her head to the side. “Does your brother look as much like Pennywise as you look like Sonia?”

“No,” Eddie said. “Ben just looks like himself.” A shiver went through him at the thought of Ben. “He’s here in Alicante,” he said, thinking out loud. “If I could see him—”

“No.” Amatis spoke with asperity. “You can’t leave the house. Not to see anyone. And definitely not to see your brother.”

“Not leave the house?” Eddie was horrified. “You mean I’m stuck here? Like a prisoner?”

“It’s only for a day or two,” Amatis admonished him, “and besides, you’re not well. You need to recover. The lake water nearly killed you.”

“But Ben—”

“Is one of the Denbroughs. You can’t go over there. The moment they see you, they’ll tell the Clave you’re here. And then you won’t be the only one in trouble with the Law. Jim will be too.”

But the Denbroughs won’t betray me to the Clave. They wouldn’t do that
—

The words died on his lips. There was no way he was going to be able to convince Amatis that the Denbroughs she’d known fifteen years ago no longer existed, that Zack and Sharon weren’t blindly loyal fanatics anymore. This woman might be Jim’s sister, but she was still a stranger to Eddie. She was almost a stranger to Jim. He hadn’t seen her in fifteen years—had never even mentioned she existed. Eddie leaned back against the pillows, feigning weariness. “You’re right,” he said. “I don’t feel well. I think I’d better sleep.”

“Good idea.” Amatis leaned over and plucked the empty mug out of her hand. “If you want to take a shower, the bathroom’s across the hall. And there’s a trunk of old clothes at the foot of the bed. Mine and Will’s. You look like you’re about the size he was when he was your age, so they might fit you. Unlike those pajamas,” she added, and smiled, a weak smile that Eddie didn’t return. He was too busy fighting the urge to pound his fists against the mattress in frustration.

The moment the door closed behind Amatis, Eddie scrambled out of bed and headed for the bathroom, hoping that standing in hot water would help clear her head. To his relief, for all their old-fashionedness, the Shadowhunters seemed to believe in modern plumbing and hot and cold running water. There was even sharply scented citrus soap to rinse the lingering smell of Lake Lyn out of his hair.

By the time he emerged, wrapped in two towels, he was feeling much better. In the bedroom he rummaged through Amatis's trunk. The clothes were packed away neatly between layers of crisp paper. There were what looked like school clothes—merino wool sweaters with an insignia that looked like four C s back to back sewed over the breast pocket, pleated pants, and button-down shirts with narrow cuffs. There was a white dress swathed in layers of tissue paper—a wedding dress, Eddie thought, and laid it aside carefully. Below it was another dress, this one made of silvery silk, with slender bejeweled straps holding up its gossamer weight. Eddie couldn't imagine Amatis in it, but— *This is the sort of thing my mother might have worn when she went dancing with Pennywise*, he couldn't help thinking, and let the dress slide back into the trunk, its texture soft and cool against his fingers.

And then there was the Shadowhunter gear, packed away at the very bottom. Eddie drew out those clothes and spread them curiously across his lap. The first time he had seen Ben, Richie and Bill, they had been wearing their fighting gear: close-fitting tops and pants of tough, dark material. Up close he could see that the material was not stretchy but stiff, a thin leather pounded very flat until it became flexible. There was a jacket-type top that zipped up and pants that had complicated belt loops. Shadowhunter belts were big, sturdy things, meant for hanging weapons on.

Something about the fighting gear called to him; he had always been curious, always wondered what it would be like....

A few minutes later the towels were hanging over the bar at the foot of the bed and Eddie was regarding himself in the mirror with surprise and not a little amusement. The gear fit—it was tight but not too tight. It couldn't make him look formidable—he doubted anything could do that—but at least he looked taller, and his hair was extraordinarily bright. *I look like one of them*, Eddie thought.

Does your brother look as much like Pennywise as you look like Sonia? Amatis had asked, and Eddie had wanted to reply that he didn't look at all like his mother, that his mother was beautiful and he wasn't. But the Sonia that Amatis had known was the girl who'd plotted to bring down Pennywise, who'd secretly forged an alliance of Nephilim and Downworlders that had broken the Circle and saved the Accords. *That* Sonia would never have agreed to stay quietly inside this house

and wait while everything in her world fell apart.

Without pausing to think, Eddie crossed the room and shot home the bolt on the door, locking it. Then he went to the window and pushed it open. The trellis was there, clinging to the side of the stone wall like— *Like a ladder*, Eddie told himself. *Just like a ladder—and ladders are perfectly safe.*

Taking a deep breath, he crawled out onto the window ledge.

The guards came back for Stan the next morning, shaking him awake out of an already fitful sleep plagued with strange dreams. This time they didn't blindfold him as they led him back upstairs, and he snuck a quick glance through the barred door of the cell next to his. If he'd hoped to get a look at the owner of the hoarse voice that had spoken to him the night before, he was disappointed. The only thing visible through the bars was what looked like a pile of discarded rags.

The guards hurried Stan along a series of gray corridors, quick to shake him if he looked too long in any direction. Finally they came to a halt in a richly wallpapered room. There were portraits on the walls of different men and women in Shadowhunter gear, the frames decorated with patterns of runes. Below one of the largest portraits was a red couch on which the Inquisitor was seated, holding what looked like a silver cup in his hand. He held it out to Stan. "Blood?" he inquired. "You must be hungry by now."

He tipped the cup toward Stan, and the view of the red liquid inside it hit him just as the smell did. His veins strained toward the blood, like strings under the control of a master puppeteer. The feeling was unpleasant, almost painful. "Is it ... human?"

Brenner chuckled. "My boy! Don't be ridiculous. It's deer blood. Perfectly fresh."

Stan said nothing. His lower lip stung where his fangs had slid from their sheaths, and he tasted his own blood in his mouth. It filled him with nausea.

Brenner's face screwed up like a dried plum. "Oh, dear." He turned to the guards. "Leave us now, gentlemen," he said, and they turned to go. Only the Consul paused at the door, glancing back at Stan with a look of unmistakable disgust.

"No, thank you," Stan said through the thickness in his mouth. "I don't want the blood."

"Your fangs say otherwise, young Stan," Brenner replied genially. "Here. Take it." He held out the cup, and the smell of blood seemed to waft through the room like the scent of roses through a garden.

Stan's incisors stabbed downward, fully extended now, slicing into his lip. The pain was like a slap; he moved forward, almost without volition, and grabbed the cup out of the Inquisitor's hand. He drained it in three swallows, then, realizing what he had done, set it down on the arm of the couch. His hand was shaking. *Inquisitor one*, he thought. *Me zero*.

"I trust your night in the cells wasn't too unpleasant? They're not meant to be torture chambers, my boy, more along the lines of a space for enforced reflection. I find reflection absolutely centers the mind, don't you? Essential to clear thinking. I do hope you got some thinking in. You seem like a thoughtful young man." The Inquisitor cocked his head to the side. "I brought that blanket down for you with my own hands, you know. I wouldn't have wanted you to be cold."

"I'm a vampire," Stan said. "We don't get cold."

"Oh." The Inquisitor looked disappointed.

"I appreciated the Stars of David and the Seal of Solomon," Stan added dryly. "It's always nice to see someone taking an interest in my religion."

"Oh, yes, of course, of course!" Brenner brightened. "Wonderful, aren't they, the carvings? Absolutely charming, and of course foolproof. I'd imagine any attempt to touch the cell door would melt the skin right off your hand!" He chuckled, clearly amused by the thought. "In any case. Could you take a step backward for me, my

man? Just as a favor, a pure favor, you understand.”

Stan took a step back.

Nothing happened, but the Inquisitor’s eyes widened, the puffy skin around them looking stretched and shiny. “I see,” he breathed.

“You see what?”

“Look where you are, young Stan. Look all about you.”

Stan glanced around—nothing had changed about the room, and it took a moment for him to realize what Brenner meant. He was standing in a bright patch of sun that angled through a window high overhead.

Brenner was almost squirming with excitement. “You’re standing in direct sunlight, and it’s having no effect on you at all. I almost wouldn’t have believed it—I mean, I was told, of course, but I’ve never seen anything like it before.”

Stan said nothing. There seemed to be nothing to say.

“The question for you, of course,” Brenner went on, “is whether you know why you’re like this.”

“Maybe I’m just nicer than the other vampires.” Stan was immediately sorry he’d spoken. Brenner’s eyes narrowed, and a vein bulged at his temple like a fat worm. Clearly, he didn’t like jokes unless he was the one making them.

“Very amusing, very amusing,” he said. “Let me ask you this: Have you been a Daylighter since the moment you rose from the grave?”

“No.” Stan spoke with care. “No. At first the sun burned me. Even just a patch of sunlight would scorch my skin.”

“Indeed.” Brenner gave a vigorous nod, as if to say that that was the way things ought to be. “So when was it you first noticed that you could walk in the daylight without pain?”

“It was the morning after the big battle on Pennywise’s ship—”

"During which Pennywise captured you, is that correct? He had captured you and kept you prisoner on his ship, meaning to use your blood to complete the Ritual of Infernal Conversion."

"I guess you know everything already," Stan said. "You hardly need me."

"Oh, no, not at all!" Brenner cried, throwing up his hands. He had very small hands, Stan noticed, so small that they looked a little out of place at the ends of his plump arms. "You have so much to contribute, my dear boy! For instance, I can't help wondering if there was something that happened on the ship, something that *changed* you. Is there anything you can think of?"

I drank Ben's blood, Stan thought, half-inclined to repeat this to the Inquisitor just to be nasty—and then, with a jolt, realized, *I drank Ben's blood*. Could that have been what changed him? Was it possible? And whether it was possible or not, could he tell the Inquisitor what Ben had done? He didn't owe Ben anything.

Except that wasn't strictly true. Ben had *offered* him his blood to drink, had saved his life with it. Would another Shadowhunter have done that, for a vampire? He thought of himself saying, *I could have killed you*. And Ben: *I would have let you*. There was no telling what kind of trouble Ben would get into if the Clave knew he had saved Stan's life, and how.

"I don't remember anything from the boat," Stan said. "I think Pennywise must have drugged me or something."

Brenner's face fell. "That's terrible news. Terrible. I'm so sorry to hear it."

"I'm sorry too," Stan said, although he wasn't.

"So there isn't a single thing you remember? Not one colorful detail?"

"I just remember passing out when Pennywise attacked me, and then I woke up later on ... on Jim's truck, headed home. I don't remember anything else."

"Oh dear, oh dear." Brenner drew his cloak around him. "I see the

Denbroughs seem to have become rather fond of you, but the other members of the Clave are not so ... understanding. You were captured by Pennywise, you emerged from this confrontation with a peculiar new power you hadn't had before, and now you've found your way to the heart of Derry. You do see how it *looks*?"

If Stan's heart had still been able to beat, it would have been racing. "You think I'm a spy for Pennywise."

Brenner looked shocked. "My boy, my boy—I trust you, of course. I trust you implicitly! But the Clave, oh, the Clave, I'm afraid they can be very suspicious. We had so hoped you'd be able to help us. You see—and I shouldn't be telling you this, but I feel I can confide in you, dear boy—the Clave is in dreadful trouble."

"The Clave?" Stan felt dazed. "But what does that have to do with—"

"You see," Brenner went on, the Clave is split down the middle—at war with itself, you might say, in a time of war. Mistakes were made, by the previous Inquisitor and others—perhaps it's better not to dwell. But you see, the very authority of the Clave, of the Consul and the Inquisitor, is under question. Pennywise always seems to be a step ahead of us, as if he knows our plans in advance. The Council will not listen to my advice or Malachi's, not after what happened in New York."

"I thought that was the Inquisitor—"

"And Malachi was the one who appointed her. Now, of course, he had no idea she would go as mad as she did—"

"But," Stan said, a little sourly, "there is the question of how it *looks*."

The vein bulged in Brenner's forehead again. "Clever," he said. "And you're correct. Appearances are significant, and never more than in politics. You can always sway the crowd, provided you have a *good story*." He leaned forward, his eyes locked on Stan. "Now let me tell you a story. It goes like this. The Denbroughs were once in the Circle. At some point they recanted and were granted mercy on the grounds that they stayed out of Derry, went to New York, and ran the Institute there. Their blameless record began to win them back the trust of the

Clave. But all along they knew Pennywise was alive. All along they were his loyal servants. They took in his son—”

“But they didn’t know—”

“Be *quiet*,” the Inquisitor snarled, and Stan shut his mouth. “They helped him find the Mortal Instruments and assisted him with the Ritual of Infernal Conversion. When the Inquisitor discovered what they were secretly up to, they arranged to have her killed during the battle on the ship. And now they have come here, to the heart of the Clave, to spy on our plans and reveal them to Pennywise as they are made, so that he can defeat us and ultimately bend all Nephilim to his will. And they have brought you with them—you, a vampire who can withstand sunlight—to distract us from their true plans: to return the Circle to its former glory and destroy the Law.” The Inquisitor leaned forward, his piggy eyes gleaming. “What do you think of that story, vampire?”

“I think it’s insane,” said Stan. “And it’s got more giant holes in it than Kent Avenue in Brooklyn—which, incidentally, hasn’t been resurfaced in years. I don’t know what you’re hoping to accomplish with this—”

“*Hoping?*” echoed Brenner. “I don’t hope, Downworlder. I know in my heart. I know it is my sacred duty to save the Clave.”

“With a lie?” said Stan.

“With a story,” said Brenner. “Great politicians weave tales to inspire their people.”

“There’s nothing inspirational about blaming the Denbroughs for everything—”

“Some must be sacrificed,” said Brenner. His face shone with a sweaty light. “Once the Council has a common enemy, and a reason to trust the Clave again, they will come together. What is the cost of one family, weighed against all that? In fact, I doubt anything much will happen to the Denbrough children. They won’t be blamed. Well, perhaps the eldest boy. But the others—”

"You can't do this," Stan said. "Nobody will believe this story."

"People believe what they want to believe," Brenner said, "and the Clave wants someone to blame. I can give them that. All I need is you."

"Me? What does this have to do with me?"

"Confess." The Inquisitor's face was scarlet with excitement now. "Confess that you're a servant of the Denbroughs, that you're all in league with Pennywise. Confess and I'll show you leniency. I'll send you back to your own people. I swear to it. But I need your confession to make the Clave believe."

"You want me to confess to a lie," Stan said. He knew he was just repeating what the Inquisitor had already said, but his mind was whirling; he couldn't seem to catch hold of a single thought. The faces of the Denbroughs spun through his mind—Bill, catching his breath on the path up to the Gard; Ben's dark eyes turned up to his; Georgie bent over a book.

And Richie. The Inquisitor hadn't said his name, but Stan knew Richie would pay along with the rest of them. And whatever he suffered, Eddie would suffer. How had it happened, Stan thought, that he was bound to these people—to people who thought of him as nothing more than a Downworlder, half human at best?

He raised his eyes to the Inquisitor's. Brenner's were an odd charcoal black; looking into them was like looking into darkness. "No," Stan said. "No, I won't do it."

"That blood I gave you," Brenner said, "is all the blood you'll see until you give me a different answer." There was no kindness in his voice, not even false kindness. "You'd be surprised how thirsty you can get."

San said nothing. "Another night in the cells, then," the Inquisitor said, rising to his feet and reaching for a bell to summon the guards. "It's quite peaceful down there, isn't it? I do find that a peaceful atmosphere can help with a little problem of memory—don't you?"

Though Eddie had told himself he remembered the way he'd come with Jim the night before, this turned out not to be entirely true. Heading toward the city center seemed like the best bet for getting directions, but once he found the stone courtyard with the disused well, he couldn't remember whether to turn left or right from it. He turned left, which plunged him into a warren of twisting streets, each one much like the next and each turn getting him more hopelessly lost than before.

Finally he emerged into a wider street lined with shops. Pedestrians hurried by on either side, none of them giving him a second glance. A few of them were also dressed in fighting gear, although most weren't: It was cool out, and long, old-fashioned coats were the order of the day. The wind was brisk, and with a pang Eddie thought of his green velvet coat, hanging up in Amatis's spare bedroom.

Jim hadn't been lying when he'd said that Shadowhunters had come from all over the world for the summit. Eddie passed an Indian woman in a gorgeous gold sari, a pair of curved blades hanging from a chain around her waist. A tall, dark-skinned man with an angular Aztec face was gazing into a shop window full of weaponry; bracelets made of the same hard, shining material as the demon towers laddered his wrists. Farther down the street a man in a white nomadic robe consulted what looked like a street map. The sight of him gave Eddie the nerve to approach a passing woman in a heavy brocade coat and ask her the way to Princewater Street. If there was ever going to be a time when the city's inhabitants wouldn't necessarily be suspicious of someone who didn't seem to know where they were going, this would be it.

His instinct was right; without a trace of hesitation the woman gave him a hurried series of directions. "And then right at the end of Oldcastle Canal, and over the stone bridge, and that's where you'll find Princewater." She gave Eddie a smile. "Visiting anyone in particular?"

"The Mayfields."

"Oh, that's the blue house, gold trim, backs up onto the canal. It's a

big place—you can't miss it."

She was half-right. It was a big place, but Eddie walked right by it before realizing his mistake and swerving back around to look at it again. It was really more indigo than blue, he thought, but then again not everyone noticed colors that way. Most people couldn't tell the difference between lemon yellow and saffron. As if they were even close to each other! And the trim on the house wasn't gold; it was bronze. A nice darkish bronze, as if the house had been there for many years, and it probably had. Everything in this place was so ancient—

Enough, Eddie told himself. He always did this when he was nervous, let his mind wander off in all sorts of random directions. He rubbed his hands down the sides of his trousers; his palms were sweaty and damp. The material felt rough and dry against his skin, like snake scales.

He mounted the steps and took hold of the heavy door knocker. It was shaped like a pair of angel's wings, and when he let it fall, he could hear the sound echoing like the tolling of a huge bell. A moment later the door was yanked open, and Ben stood on the threshold, his eyes wide with shock.

"Eddie?"

Eddie smiled weakly. "Hi, Ben."

Ben leaned against the doorjamb, his expression dismal. "Oh, *crap*."

7. My Heart Will Go On

Notes for the Chapter:

This is heavy, beware :(

Back in the cell Stan collapsed on the bed, listening to the footsteps of the guards recede as they marched away from his door. Another night. Another night down here in prison, while the Inquisitor waited for him to “remember.” *You do see how it looks?* In all his worst fears, his worst nightmares, it had never occurred to Stan that anyone might think he was in league with *Pennywise*. Pennywise hated Downworlders, famously. Pennywise had stabbed him and drained his blood and left him to die. Although, admittedly, the Inquisitor didn’t know that.

There was a rustle from the other side of the cell wall. “I have to admit, I wondered if you’d be coming back,” said the hoarse voice Stan remembered from the night before. “I take it you didn’t give the Inquisitor what he wants?”

“I don’t think so,” Stan said, approaching the wall. He ran his fingers over the stone as if looking for a crack in it, something he could see through, but there was nothing. “Who are you?”

“He’s a stubborn man, Brenner,” said the voice, as if Stan hadn’t spoken. “He’ll keep trying.”

Stan leaned against the damp wall. “Then I guess I’ll be down here for a while.”

“I don’t suppose you’d be willing to tell me what it is he wants from you?”

“Why do you want to know?”

The chuckle that answered Stan sounded like metal scraping against stone. “I’ve been in this cell longer than you have, Daylighter, and as you can see, there’s not a lot to keep the mind occupied. Any distraction helps.”

Stan laced his hands over his stomach. The deer blood had taken the edge off his hunger, but it hadn't been quite enough. His body still ached with thirst. "You keep calling me that," he said. "*Daylighter*."

"I heard the guards talking about you. A vampire who can walk around in the sunlight. No one's ever seen anything like it before."

"And yet you have a word for it. Convenient."

"It's a Downworlder word, not a Clave one. They have legends about creatures like you. I'm surprised you don't know that."

"I haven't exactly been a Downworlder for very long," Stan said. "And you seem to know a lot about me."

"The guards like to gossip," said the voice. "And the Denbroughs appearing through the Portal with a bleeding, dying vampire—that's a good piece of gossip. Though I have to say I wasn't expecting you to show up here—not until they started fixing up the cell for you. I'm surprised the Denbroughs stood for it."

"Why wouldn't they?" Stan said bitterly. "I'm nothing. I'm a Downworlder."

"Maybe to the Consul," said the voice. "But the Denbroughs—"

"What about them?"

There was a short pause. "Those Shadowhunters who live outside Derry—especially those who run Institutes—tend to be more tolerant. The local Clave, on the other hand, is a good deal more ... hidebound."

"And what about you?" Stan said. "Are you a Downworlder?"

"A *Downworlder*?" Stan couldn't be sure, but there was an edge of anger in the stranger's voice, as if he resented the question. "My name is Stephen. Stephen King. I am Nephilim. Years ago I was in the Circle, with Pennywise. I slaughtered Downworlders at the Uprising. I am *not* one of them."

"Oh." Stan swallowed. His mouth tasted of salt. The members of

Pennywise's Circle had been caught and punished by the Clave, he remembered—except for those like the Denbroughs, who'd managed to make deals or accept exile in exchange for forgiveness. "Have you been down here ever since?"

"No. After the Uprising, I slipped out of Derry before I could be caught. I stayed away for years—years—until like a fool, thinking I'd been forgotten, I came back. Of course they caught me the moment I returned. The Clave has its ways of tracking its enemies. They dragged me in front of the Inquisitor, and I was interrogated for days. When they were done, they tossed me in here." Stephen sighed. "In French this sort of prison is called an *oubliette*. It means 'a forgetting place.' It's where you toss the garbage you don't want to remember, so it can rot away without bothering you with its stench."

"Fine. I'm a Downworlder, so I'm garbage. But you're not. You're Nephilim."

"I'm Nephilim who was in league with Pennywise. That makes me no better than you. Worse, even. I'm a turncoat."

"But there are plenty of other Shadowhunters who used to be Circle members—the Denbroughs and the Mayfields—"

"They all recanted. Turned their backs on Pennywise. I didn't."

"You didn't? But why not?"

"Because I'm more afraid of Pennywise than I am of the Clave," said Stephen, "and if you were sensible, Daylighter, you would be too."

"But you're supposed to be in New York!" Ben exclaimed. "Richie said you'd changed your mind about coming. He said you wanted to stay with your mother!"

"Richie lied," Eddie said flatly. "*He* didn't want me here, so he lied to me about when you were leaving, and then lied to you about me changing my mind. Remember when you told me he never lies? That is so not true."

"He normally never does," said Ben, who had gone pale. "Look, did you come here—I mean, does this have something to do with Stan?"

"With Stan? No. Stan's safe in New York, thank God. Although he's going to be really pissed that he never got to say good-bye to him." Ben's blank expression was starting to annoy Eddie. "Come on, Ben. Let me in. I need to see Richie."

"So ... you just came here on your own? Did you have permission from the Clave? Please tell me you had permission from the Clave."

"Not as such—"

"You broke the *Law*?" Ben's voice rose, and then dropped. He went on, almost in a whisper, "If Richie finds out, he'll freak. Eddie, you've got to go home."

"No. I'm supposed to be here," Eddie said, not even sure himself quite where his stubbornness was coming from. "And I need to talk to Richie."

"Now isn't a good time." Ben looked around anxiously, as if hoping there was someone he could appeal to for help in removing Eddie from the premises. "Please, just go back to New York. Please?"

"I thought you liked me, Ben." Eddie went for the guilt. "We're brothers, aren't we?"

Ben bit his lip. He was wearing a white shirt and had his hair pinned up and looked younger than he usually did. Behind him, Eddie could see a high-ceilinged entryway hung with antique-looking oil paintings. "I *do* like you. It's just that Richie—*What* are you wearing? Where did you get fighting gear?"

Eddie looked down at himself. "It's a long story."

"You can't come in here like that. If Richie sees you—"

"Oh, so what if he sees me. Ben, I came here because of my mother—for *our* mother. Richie may not want me here, but he can't make me stay home. I'm supposed to be here. My mother expected me to do this for her. You'd do it for Sharon, wouldn't you?"

“Of course I would,” Ben said. “But, Eddie, Richie has his reasons—”

“Then I’d love to hear what they are.” Eddie ducked under Ben’s arm and into the entryway of the house.

“Eddie!” Ben yelled, and darted after him, but Eddie was already halfway down the hall. He saw, with the half of his mind that wasn’t concentrating on dodging Ben, that the house was built like Amatis’s, tall and thin, but considerably larger and more richly decorated. The hallway opened into a room with high windows that looked out over a wide canal. White boats plied the water, their sails drifting by like dandelion clocks tossed on the wind. A dark-haired boy sat on a couch by one of the windows, apparently reading a book.

“Henry!” Ben called. “Don’t let him go upstairs!”

The boy looked up, startled—and a moment later was in front of Eddie, blocking his path to the stairs. Eddie skidded to a halt—he’d never seen anyone move that fast before, except Ben. The boy wasn’t even out of breath; in fact, he was smiling at him.

“So this is the famous Eddie.” His smile lit up his face, and Eddie felt his own breath catch. For years he’d drawn his own ongoing graphic story—the tale of a king’s son who was under a curse that meant that everyone he loved would die. Eddie had put everything he had into dreaming up his dark, romantic, shadowy prince, and here he was, standing in front of him—the same pale skin, the same tumbling hair, and eyes so dark, the pupils seemed to meld with the iris. The same high cheekbones and deep-set, shadowed eyes fringed with long lashes. Eddie knew he’d never set eyes on this boy before, and yet ...

The boy looked puzzled. “I don’t think—have we met before?”

Speechless, Eddie shook his head.

“Henry!” Ben was between them. “He’s not supposed to be here. Eddie, go home.”

With an effort Eddie wrenched his gaze away from Henry and shot a glare at Ben. “What, back to New York? And how am I supposed to get there?”

"How did you get here?" Henry inquired. "Sneaking into Alicante is quite an accomplishment."

"I came through a Portal," said Eddie.

"A Portal?" Ben looked astonished. "But there isn't a Portal left in New York. Pennywise destroyed them both—"

"I don't owe you any explanations," Eddie said. "Not until you give me some. For one thing, where's Richie?"

"He's not here," Ben answered, at exactly the same time that Henry said, "He's upstairs."

Ben turned on him. "Henry! Shut up."

Henry looked perplexed. "Why don't you want Eddie to see him?"

Ben opened his mouth and then closed it again. Eddie could see that Ben was weighing the advisability of explaining his complicated relationship with Richie to the completely oblivious Henry against the advisability of springing an unpleasant surprise on Richie. Finally he threw his hands up in a gesture of despair. "Fine, Eddie," he said, with an unusual—for Ben—amount of anger in his voice. "Go ahead and do whatever you want, regardless of who it hurts. You always do anyway, don't you?"

Ouch. Eddie shot Ben a reproachful look before turning back to Henry, who stepped silently out of his way. Eddie darted past him and up the stairs, vaguely aware of voices below him as Ben shouted at the unfortunate Henry. But that was Ben.

The staircase widened into a landing with a bay-windowed alcove that looked out over the city. A boy was sitting in the alcove, reading. He looked up as Eddie came up the stairs, and blinked in surprise. "I know you."

"Hi, Georgie. It's Eddie—Ben's brother. Remember?"

Georgie brightened. "You showed me how to read *Naruto*," he said, holding out his book to him. "Look, I got another one. This one's called—"

“Georgie, I can’t talk now. I promise I’ll look at your book later, but do you know where Richie is?”

Georgie’s face fell. “That room,” he said, and pointed to the last door down the hall. “I wanted to go in there with him, but he told me he had to do grown-up stuff. Everyone’s always telling me that.”

“I’m sorry,” Eddie said, but his mind was no longer on the conversation. It was racing ahead—what would he say to Richie when he saw him; what would Richie say to him? *Moving down the hall to the door, he thought, It would be better to be friendly, not angry; yelling at him will just make him defensive. He has to understand that I belong here, just like he does. I don’t need to be protected like a piece of delicate china. I’m strong too—*

He threw the door open. The room seemed to be a sort of library, the walls lined with books. It was brightly lit, light streaming through a tall picture window. In the middle of the room stood Richie. He wasn’t alone, though—not by a long shot. There was a red-haired girl with him, a girl Eddie had never seen before, and the two of them were locked together in a passionate embrace.

Dizziness washed over Eddie as if all the air had been sucked out of the room. He tried to back away but stumbled and hit the door with his shoulder. It shut with a bang, and Richie and the girl broke apart.

Eddie froze. They were both staring at him. He noticed that the girl had bright red hair to her shoulders and was extremely pretty. The top buttons of her shirt were undone, showing a strip of lacy bra. Eddie felt as if he were about to throw up.

The girl’s hands went to her blouse, quickly doing up the buttons. She didn’t look pleased. “Excuse me,” she said with a frown. “Who are you?”

Eddie didn’t answer—he was looking at Richie, who was staring at him incredulously. His skin was drained of all color, showing the dark rings around his eyes. He looked at Eddie as if he were staring down the barrel of a gun.

“Max.” Richie’s voice was without warmth or color. “This is Ben’s

brother, Eddie”

“Oh. *Oh.*” Max’s face relaxed into a slightly embarrassed smile. “Sorry! What a way to meet you. Hi, I’m Max.” She advanced on Eddie, still smiling, her hand out.

I don’t think I can touch her, Eddie thought with a sinking feeling of horror. He looked at Richie, who seemed to read the expression in his eyes; unsmiling, he took Max by the shoulders and said something in her ear. She looked surprised, shrugged, and headed for the door without another word.

This left Eddie alone with Richie. Alone with someone who was still looking at him as if Eddie were his worst nightmare come to life.

“Richie,” Eddie said, and took a step toward him.

Richie backed away from him as if Eddie were coated in something poisonous. “What,” he said, “in the name of the Angel, Eddie, are you doing here?”

Despite everything, the harshness of his tone hurt.

“You could at least pretend you were glad to see me. Even a little bit.”

“I’m not glad to see you,” he said. Some of his color had come back, but the shadows under his eyes were still gray smudges against his skin. Eddie waited for him to say something else, but he seemed content just to stare at him in undisguised horror. Eddie noticed with a distracted clarity that Richie was wearing a black sweater that hung off his wrists as if he’d lost weight, and that the nails on his hands were bitten down to the quick. “Not even a little bit.”

“This isn’t you,” Eddie said. “I hate it when you act like this—”

“Oh, you hate it, do you? Well, I’d better stop doing it, then, hadn’t I? I mean, you do everything *I* ask you to do.”

“You had no right to do what you did!” Eddie snapped at him, suddenly furious. “Lying to me like that. You had no right—”

"I had *every* right!" he shouted. Eddie didn't think he'd ever shouted at him before. "You stupid, stupid boy. I didn't want you here, I—"

"And you what? Now you *own* me? You don't own me!"

The door behind Eddie flew open. It was Bill, soberly dressed in a long, dark blue jacket, his auburn hair in disarray. He wore muddy boots and an incredulous expression on his usually calm face. "What in all possible dimensions is going on here?" he said, looking from Richie to Eddie with amazement. "Are y-you two trying to kill each other?"

"Not at all," said Richie. As if by magic, Eddie saw, it had all been wiped away: his rage and his panic, and he was icy calm again. "Eddie was just leaving."

"Good," Bill said, "b-because I need to talk to you, Richie."

"Doesn't anyone in this house ever say, 'Hi, nice to see you' anymore?" Eddie demanded of no one in particular.

It was much easier to guilt Bill than Ben. "It is good to see you, Eddie," he said, "except of course for the fact that y-you're really not supposed to be here. Ben told me you got here on your own s-somehow, and I'm impressed—"

"Could you *not* encourage him?" Richie inquired.

"But I really, really need to talk to Richie about something. Can you give us a few m-minutes?"

"I need to talk to him too," Eddie said. "About the—"

"I don't feel like talking," said Richie, "to either of you, as a matter of fact."

"Yes, you do," Bill said. "You really want to talk to me about this."

"I doubt that," Richie said. He had turned his gaze back to Eddie. "You didn't come here alone, did you?" he said slowly, as if realizing that the situation was even worse than he'd thought. "Who came with you?"

There seemed to be no point in lying about it. “Jim,” said Eddie. “Jim came with me.”

Richie blanched. “But Jim is a Downworlder. Do you know what the Clave does to unregistered Downworlders who come into the Glass City—who cross the wards without permission? Coming to Derry is one thing, but entering Alicante? Without telling anyone?”

“No,” Eddie said, in a half whisper, “but I know what you’re going to say—”

“That if you and Jim don’t go back to New York immediately, you’ll find out?”

For a moment Richie was silent, meeting Eddie’s eyes with his own. The desperation in his expression shocked him. He was the one threatening Eddie, after all, not the other way around.

“Richie,” Bill said into the silence, a tinge of panic creeping into his voice. “Haven’t you w-wondered where I’ve been all day?”

“That’s a new coat you’re wearing,” Richie said, without looking at his friend. “I figure you went shopping. Though why you’re so eager to bother me about it, I have no idea.”

“I didn’t go shopping,” Bill said furiously. “I went—”

The door opened again. Ben darted in, shutting the door behind him. He looked at Eddie and shook his head. “I told you he’d freak out,” he said. “Didn’t I?”

“Ah, the ‘I told you so,’” Richie said. “Always a classy move.”

Eddie looked at him with horror. “How can you *joke*?” he whispered. “You just threatened Jim. Jim, who likes you and trusts you. Because he’s a Downworlder. What’s wrong with you?”

Ben looked horrified. “Jim’s here? Oh, Eddie—”

“He’s *not* here,” Eddie said. “He left—this morning—and I don’t know where he went. But I can certainly see now why he had to go.” He could hardly bear to look at Richie. “Fine. You win. We should never

have come. I should never have made that Portal—”

“*Made* a Portal?” Ben looked bewildered. “Eddie, only a warlock can make a Portal. And there aren’t very many of them. The only Portal here in Derry is in the Gard.”

“Which is what I have to talk to you about,” Bill hissed at Richie—who looked, Eddie saw with surprise, even worse than he had before; he looked as if he were about to pass out. “About the errand I w-went on last night—the thing I had to deliver to the Gard—”

“Bill, stop. *Stop*,” Richie said, and the harsh desperation in his voice cut the other boy off; Bill shut his mouth and stood staring at Richie, his lip caught between his teeth. But Richie didn’t seem to see him; he was looking at Eddie, and his eyes were hard as glass. Finally he spoke. “You’re right,” he said in a choked voice, as if he had to force out the words. “You should never have come. I know I told you it’s because it isn’t safe for you here, but that wasn’t true. The truth is that I don’t want you here because you’re rash and thoughtless and you’ll mess everything up. It’s just how you are. You’re not careful, Eddie.”

“Mess ... everything ... up?” Eddie couldn’t get enough air into his lungs for anything but a whisper.

“Oh, Richie,” Ben said sadly, as if *Richie* were the one who was hurt. He didn’t look at Ben. His gaze was fixed on Eddie.

“You always just race ahead without thinking,” he said. “You know that, Eddie. We’d never have ended up in the Dumort if it wasn’t for you.”

“And Stan would be *dead*! Doesn’t that count for anything? Maybe it was rash, but—”

His voice rose. “*Maybe?*”

“But it’s not like every decision I’ve made was a bad one! You said, after what I did on the boat, you *said* I’d saved everyone’s life—”

All the remaining color in Richie’s face went. He said, with a sudden and astounding viciousness, “Shut up, Eddie, SHUT UP—”

“On the boat?” Bill’s gaze danced between them, bewildered. “W-what about what happened on the boat? Richie—”

“I just told you that to keep you from whining!” Richie shouted ignoring Bill, ignoring everything but Eddie. Eddie could feel the force of Richie’s sudden anger like a wave threatening to knock him off his feet. “You’re a disaster for us, Eddie! You’re a mundane—you’ll always be one; you’ll never be a Shadowhunter. You don’t know how to think like we do, think about what’s best for everyone—all you ever think about is yourself! But there’s a war on now, or there will be, and I don’t have the time or the inclination to follow around after you, trying to make sure you don’t get one of us killed!”

Eddie just stared at him. He couldn’t think of a thing to say; he’d never spoken to him like this. Eddie had never even *imagined* Richie speaking to him like this. However angry he’d managed to make Richie in the past, he’d never spoken to him as if he hated him before.

“Go home, Eddie,” he said. He sounded very tired, as if the effort of telling Eddie how he really felt had drained him. “Go home.”

All his plans evaporated—his half-formed hopes of rushing after Prasad, saving his mother, even finding Jim—nothing mattered, no words came. Eddie crossed to the door. Bill and Ben moved to let him pass. Neither of them would look at him; they looked away instead, their expressions shocked and embarrassed. Eddie knew he probably ought to feel humiliated as well as angry, but he didn’t. He just felt dead inside.

He turned at the door and looked back. Richie was staring after him. The light that streamed through the window behind him left his face in shadow; all Eddie could see was the bright bits of sunshine that dusted his hair, like shards of broken glass.

“Even when Stan said you were an awful person, I didn’t believe it,” he said “Not just because I didn’t want it to be true, but because I knew that you were different. But I was wrong. I was so wrong.”

Eddie went out of the room, shutting the door behind him.

Notes for the Chapter:

So..... I hope it wasn't too heavy. And I hope you guys understand both points of view.

Also, Stephen King bc yes. (Even though I hate him a little LOL)

8. Point of No Return

Summary for the Chapter:

I'll do my best to update daily :3

“They’re going to starve me,” Stan said.

He was lying on the floor of his cell, the stone cold under his back. From this angle, though, he could see the sky through the window. In the days after Stan had first become a vampire, when he had thought he would never see daylight again, he’d found himself thinking incessantly about the sun and the sky. About the ways the color of the sky changed during the day: about the pale sky of morning, the hot blue of midday, and the cobalt darkness of twilight. He’d lain awake in the darkness with a parade of blues marching through his brain. Now, flat on his back in the cell under the Gard, he wondered if he’d had daylight and all its blues restored to him just so that he could spend the short, unpleasant rest of his life in this tiny space with only a patch of sky visible through the single barred window in the wall.

“Did you hear what I said?” He raised his voice. “The Inquisitor’s going to starve me to death. No more blood.”

There was a rustling noise. An audible sigh. Then Stephen spoke. “I heard you. I just don’t know what you want me to do about it.” He paused. “I’m sorry for you, Daylighter, if that helps.”

“It doesn’t really,” Stan said. “The Inquisitor wants me to lie. Wants me to tell him that the Denbroughs are in league with Pennywise. Then he’ll send me home.” He rolled over onto his stomach, the stones jabbing into his skin. “Never mind. I don’t know why I’m telling you all this. You probably have no idea what I’m talking about.”

Stephen made a noise halfway between a chuckle and a cough. “Actually, I do. I knew the Denbroughs. We were in the Circle together. The Denbroughs, the Hanscoms, the Wheelers, the Byers, the Mayfields. All the fine families of Alicante.”

"And Norbert Keene," Stan said, thinking of the Denbroughs' tutor. "He was too, wasn't he?"

"He was," said Stephen. "But his family was hardly a well-respected one. Norbert showed some promise once, but I fear he never lived up to it." He paused. "Brenner's always hated the Denbroughs, of course, since we were children. He wasn't rich or clever or attractive, and, well, they weren't very kind to him. I don't think he's ever gotten over it."

"Rich?" Stan said. "I thought all Shadowhunters got paid by the Clave. Like ... I don't know, communism or something."

"In theory all Shadowhunters are fairly and equally paid," said Stephen. "Some, like those with high positions in the Clave, or those with great responsibility—running an Institute, for example—receive a higher salary. Then there are those who live outside Derry and choose to make money in the mundane world; it's not forbidden, as long as they tithe a part of it to the Clave. But"—Stephen hesitated—"you saw the Mayfields' house, didn't you? What did you think of it?"

Stan cast his mind back. "Very fancy."

"It's one of the finest houses in Alicante," said Stephen. "And they have another house, a manor out in the country. Almost all the rich families do. You see, there's another way for Nephilim to gain wealth. They call it 'spoils.' Anything owned by a demon or Downworlder who is killed by a Shadowhunter becomes that Shadowhunter's property. So if a wealthy warlock breaks the Law, and is killed by a Nephilim ..."

Stan shivered. "So killing Downworlders is a lucrative business?"

"It can be," said Stephen bitterly, "if you're not too choosy about who you kill. You can see why there's so much opposition to the Accords. It cuts into people's pocketbooks, having to be careful about murdering Downworlders. Perhaps that's why I joined the Circle. My family was never a rich one, and to be looked down on for not accepting blood money—" He broke off.

“But the Circle murdered Downworlders too,” said Stan.

“Because they thought it was their sacred duty,” said Stephen. “Not out of greed. Though I can’t imagine now why I ever thought that mattered.” He sounded exhausted. “It was Pennywise. He had a way about him. He could convince you of anything. I remember standing beside him with my hands covered in blood, looking down at the body of a dead woman, and thinking only that what I was doing had to be right, because Pennywise said it was so.”

“A dead Downworlder?”

Stephen breathed raggedly on the other side of the wall. At last, he said, “You must understand: I would have done anything he asked. Any of us would have. The Denbroughs as well. The Inquisitor knows that, and that is what he is trying to exploit. But you should know—there’s the chance that if you give in to him and throw blame on the Denbroughs, he’ll kill you anyway to shut you up. It depends on whether the idea of being merciful makes him feel powerful at the time.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Stan said. “I’m not going to do it. I won’t betray the Denbroughs.”

“Really?” Stephen sounded unconvinced. “Is there some reason why not? Do you care for the Denbroughs that much?”

“Anything I told him about them would be a lie.”

“But it might be the lie he wants to hear. You do want to go home, don’t you?”

Stan stared at the wall as if he could somehow see through it to the man on the other side. “Is that what you’d do? Lie to him?”

Stephen coughed—a wheezy sort of cough, as if he wasn’t very healthy. Then again, it was damp and cold down here, which didn’t bother Stan, but would probably bother a normal human being very much. “I wouldn’t take moral advice from me,” he said. “But yes, I probably would. I’ve always put saving my own skin first.”

“I’m sure that’s not true.”

“Actually,” said Stephen, “it is. One thing you’ll learn as you get older, Stan, is that when people tell you something unpleasant about themselves, it’s usually true.”

But I’m not going to get older, Stan thought. Out loud he said, “That’s the first time you’ve called me Stan. Stan and not Daylighter.”

“I suppose it is.”

“And as for the Denbroughs,” Stan said, “it’s not that I like them that much. I mean, I like Ben, and I sort of like Bill and Richie, too. But there’s this *person*. And Ben is their brother.”

When Stephen replied, he sounded, for the first time, genuinely amused. “Isn’t there always someone.”

“Hey. You’ve reached Stan. Please, leave a message.”

“Fucking Christ, Stan.” Beverly muttered as the fourth attempt to call Stan was useless. Typical. When Eddie and Stan called her, she was obligated to answer whenever they liked, but when *she* wanted to talk, they wouldn’t answer.

“That’s some language, Bev,” she heard Kay’s voice behind her, she turned around to find Kay standing in the doorway, holding a bowl filled with popcorn. “I certainly didn’t taught you that.” She was using her teasing tone.

Beverly scoffed. “I’ll pretend I believe you.” She held out her arm pointing to the bowl.

Kay entered the room and sat beside Beverly in the bed, the mattress was on the floor but Beverly was too lazy to do anything about it.

“Trouble in paradise?” Kay asked, raising an eyebrow. “Calling more than three times will make you seem desperate.”

“Ew! No!” Beverly laughed. “It was just Stan.”

Kay wrinkled her nose. “Does he still smell like detergent?”

Beverly raised her head, chewing the popcorns. *He doesn't smell like anything now.* “Yep, but I got used to it already.”

“How's Eddie? I haven't talked to him since...I don't know, two years ago.”

“Eddie is...” Beverly took a deep breath, then shook her head. “He's fine, I guess.”

“Did you guys get into a fight? Those are intense.”

“Of course not,” Beverly held five popcorns in her hand, as if she were examining it. “We're just going through stuff.”

“What kind of stuff?” Kay asked curiously.

“The kind of stuff every group best friends go through,” Beverly shrugged, suddenly not feeling like eating at all, she put the five popcorns into her mouth anyway. “You know, the I-need-some-time-for-myself stuff.”

“Hm,” Kay made a thinking face, it was unusual, she was the kind of person who just said what she thought immediately. “I know what you mean. It's weird, right? I mean, you think that your best friends will always be with you, and they are, but then you realize that they don't always have to be *with* you.”

“But it's not their fault,” Beverly said. “*I'm* the one who decided to go.”

“I understand,” Kay said, staring at the ceiling. “When I got emancipated, my mom was furious, she told me I was being childish, that I needed to grow up. And she warned me that life as an adult is the worst thing ever, and I didn't listen to her, I was too stubborn.”

“How *did* you get aunt Leslie to get you emancipated, anyway?” Beverly asked.

“It wasn't easy, but it was like *she* wanted me to go and not the other way around, so I'm here now.” Kay pursed her lips, staring at the bowl. “Sometimes I regret my decision, I've grown up with them my entire life, and now...”

“Now you feel out of place,” Beverly finished for her.

Kay nodded, her eyes were glowing with upcoming tears. “Maybe that’s why I wanted you to come with me. Maybe I was too alone. I’m sorry if I made you distant yourself from your friends.”

“Kay,” Beverly put her hands around her cousin and caressed her hair. “It doesn’t matter, you’re not alone.”

“Jesus, I got so emotional,” Kay laughed. “I’m sorry.”

Beverly shrugged. “It’s okay.”

There was a long silence between them, but it wasn’t uncomfortable, the opposite actually, silence was good. Beverly stared at her. Kay’s hair was long and fell as straight as honey being poured, golden brown with hints of strawberry. Her skin was, without any recourse to a strenuous routine of diet and cleansing, clear and smooth with a peachy tone. Her eyes were light brown, her lips full and soft; a perfect shade of raspberry. She had a way of moving that looked like a ballet dancer unfolding from a tight hold.

It even surprised Kay herself. Beverly had seen it on occasion—noticed the way Kay would catch sight of herself in the mirror and pause. Not admiringly, but as if startled by a stranger. Sometimes Beverly wondered who was sharing her room. It wasn’t the lanky girl she’d spent the past few years with, years over which they’d forged their firm, sisterly bond. Kay had become someone else, a young woman of understated sensuality and grace. If she slouched a little, curled her lip just a tad, a smoldering teenager returned her gaze. Total transformation. As though all it took was a small shift inside her brain, a subtle tweak of an attitude, and she could be whatever anyone wanted to see.

It didn’t last long, as Beverly’s phone started ringing. She rolled her eyes and looked at the screen, ready to bombard Stan or Eddie with questions, but she frowned when she saw it was Mike.

“Who’s *Mike*?” Kay raised an eyebrow.

“Just a friend,” Beverly answered a second too late. She hit *accept*

call, and Mike's raspy voice filled the earpiece. "Hey, Mike."

"Hey," There was an edge in his voice. "Have you heard of Stan?"

"No, I tried calling him but he doesn't answer, why?"

"Beverly," he said. "Something's wrong."

The moment the door shut behind Eddie, Richie slumped back against the wall, as if his legs had been cut out from under him. He looked gray with a mixture of horror, shock, and what looked almost like ... relief, as if a catastrophe had been narrowly avoided.

"Richie," Bill said, taking a step toward his friend. "Do you really think—"

Richie spoke in a low voice, cutting Bill off. "Get out," he said. "Just get out, both of you."

"So you can do what?" Ben demanded. "Wreck your life some more? What the hell was that *about*?"

Richie shook his head. "I sent him home. It was the best thing for him."

"You did a hell of a lot more than send him home. You *destroyed* him. Did you see his face?"

"It was worth it," said Richie. "You wouldn't understand."

"For him, maybe," Ben said. "I hope it winds up worth it for you."

Richie turned his face away. "Just ... leave me alone, Ben. Please."

Ben cast a startled look towards his adoptive brother. Richie *never* said please. Bill put a hand on Ben's shoulder. "Never mind, Richie," he said, as kindly as he could. "I'm s-sure Eddie willl be fine."

Richie raised his head and looked at Bill without actually looking at him—he seemed to be staring off at nothing. "No, he won't," he said.

“But I knew that. Speaking of which, you might as well tell me what you came in here to tell me. You seemed to think it was pretty important at the time.”

Bill took his hand off Ben’s shoulder. “I didn’t want to tell you in front of Eddie—”

Richie’s eyes finally focused on Bill. “Didn’t want to tell me *what* in front of Eddie?”

Bill hesitated. He’d rarely seen Richie so upset, and he could only imagine what effect further unpleasant surprises might have on him. But there was no way to hide this. Richie had to know. “Yesterday,” he said, in a low voice, “when I b-brought Stan up to the Gard, Malachi told me Jane Ives would be meeting Stan at the other end of the Portal, in New York. So I sent a fire-message to Stan. But the message returned to me, so that means he’s not in New York. So I send Jane a message, I heard back from her this m-morning. She never met Stan in New York. In fact, she says there’s been no Portal activity in New York since Eddie came through.”

“Maybe Malachi was wrong,” Ben suggested, after a quick look at Richie’s ashen face. “Maybe someone else met Stan on the other side. And Jane could be wrong about the Portal activity—”

Bill shook his head. “I w-went up to the Gard this morning with Mom. I meant to ask Malachi about it myself, but when I saw him—I can’t say why—I ducked behind a corner. I c-couldn’t face him. Then I heard him talking to one of the guards. Telling them to go bring the v-vampire upstairs because the Inquisitor wanted to speak to him again.”

“Are you sure they meant Stan?” Ben asked, but there was no conviction in his voice. “Maybe ...”

“They were talking about h-how stupid the Downworlder had been to believe that they’d just send him back to New York without questioning him. One of them said that he couldn’t b-believe anyone had had the gall to try to sneak him into Alicante to begin with. And Malachi said, ‘Well, what do you expect from a Tozier?’”

“Oh,” Ben whispered. “Oh my God.” He glanced across the room. “Richie...”

Richie’s hands were clenched at his sides. His eyes looked sunken, as if they were pushing back into his skull. In other circumstances Bill would have put a hand on his shoulder, but not now; something about Richie made him hold back. “If it hadn’t been me who brought him through,” Richie said in a low, measured voice, as if he were reciting something, “maybe they would have just let him go home. Maybe they would have believed—”

“No,” Bill said. “No, Richie, it’s not your fault. You saved his life.”

“Saved him so the Clave could torture him,” said Richie. “Some favor. When Eddie finds out ...” He shook his head blindly. “He’ll think I brought him here on purpose, gave him to the Clave *knowing* what they’d do.”

“He w-won’t think that. You’d have no reason to do a thing like that.”

“Perhaps,” Richie said, slowly, “but after how I just treated him...”

“No one could ever think you’d do that, Richie,” said Ben. “No one who knows you. No one—”

But Richie didn’t wait to find out what else no one would ever think. Instead he turned around and walked over to the picture window that looked over the canal. He stood there for a moment, the light coming through the window turning the edges of his hair to gold. Then he moved, so quickly Bill didn’t have time to react. By the time he saw what was going to happen and darted forward to prevent it, it was already too late.

There was a crash—the sound of shattering—and a sudden spray of broken glass like a shower of jagged stars. Richie looked down at his left hand, the knuckles streaked with scarlet, with a clinical interest as fat red drops of blood collected and splattered down onto the floor at his feet.

Ben stared from Richie to the hole in the glass, lines radiating out from the empty center, a spiderweb of thin silver cracks. “Oh,

Richie,” he said, his voice as soft as Bill had ever heard it. “How on earth are we going to explain this to Mayfields?”

Somehow Eddie made it out of the house. He wasn’t sure how—everything was a fast blur of stairs and hallways, and then he was running to the front door and out of it and somehow he was on the Mayfields’ front steps, trying to decide whether or not he was going to throw up in their rosebushes.

They were ideally placed for throwing up in, and his stomach was roiling painfully, but the fact that all he’d eaten was some soup was catching up with him. He didn’t think there was anything in his stomach to throw up. Instead he made his way down the steps and turned blindly out of the front gate—he couldn’t remember which direction he’d come from anymore, or how to get back to Amatis’s, but it didn’t seem to matter much. It wasn’t as if he were looking forward to getting back and explaining to Jim that they had to leave Alicante or Richie would turn them in to the Clave.

Maybe Richie was right. Maybe he was rash and thoughtless. Maybe he never thought about how what he did impacted the people he loved. Stan’s face flashed across his vision, sharp as a photograph, and then Beverly’s and Jim’s—

He stopped and leaned against a lamppost. The square glass fixture looked like the sort of gas lamp that topped the vintage posts in front of the brownstones in Park Slope. Somehow it seemed reassuring.

“Eddie!” It was a boy’s voice, anxious. Immediately Eddie thought, *Richie*. He spun around. It wasn’t Richie. Henry, the dark-haired boy from the Mayfields’ living room, stood in front of him panting a little as if he’d chased Eddie down the street at a run.

Eddie felt a burst of the same feeling he’d had earlier, when he’d first seen him—recognition, mixed with something he couldn’t identify. It wasn’t like or dislike—it was a sort of pull, as if something drew him toward this boy he didn’t know. Maybe it was just the way he looked. Henry was beautiful, as beautiful as Richie and Ben. Although now that he looked at him more closely, Eddie could see that his

resemblance to his imaginary prince was not as exact as he'd thought. Even their coloring was different. It was just something in the shape of his face, the way he held himself, the dark secretiveness of his eyes...

"Are you okay?" Henry said. His voice was soft. "You ran out of the house like ..." His voice trailed off as he looked at Eddie. Eddie was still gripping the lamppost as if he needed it to hold him up. "What happened?"

"I had a fight with Richie," he said, trying to keep his voice even. He took a step closer to Eddie, and as he did, the streetlamp flickered on, casting a pool of white witchlight over them both.

Henry looked up at the light and smiled. "It's a sign."

"A sign of what?"

"A sign that you should let me walk you home."

"But I have no idea where that is," he said, realizing. "I snuck out of the house to come here. I don't remember the way I came."

"Well, who are you staying with?"

Eddie hesitated before replying.

"I won't tell anyone," Henry said. "I swear on the Angel."

Eddie stared. That was quite an oath, for a Shadowhunter. "All right," he said, before he could overthink his own decision. "I'm staying with Amatis Byers."

"Great. I know exactly where she lives." He offered Eddie his arm. "Shall we?"

Eddie managed a smile. "You're kind of pushy, you know."

He shrugged. "I have a fetish for gentleman in distress."

Eddie shook his head, and this time he took Henry's arm.

Eddie's mother had always called the time of day between twilight and nightfall "the blue hour." She said the light was strongest and most unusual then, and that it was the best time to paint. Eddie had never really understood what she meant, but now, making his way through Alicante at twilight, he did.

The blue hour in New York wasn't really blue; it was too washed out by streetlights and neon signs. Sonia must have been thinking of Derry. Here the light fell in swatches of pure violet across the golden stonework of the city, and the witchlightlamps cast circular pools of white light so bright Eddie expected to feel heat when he walked through them. He wished his mother were with her. Sonia could have pointed out the parts of Alicante that were familiar to her, that had a place in her memories.

But she'd never tell you any of those things. She kept them secret from you on purpose. And now you may never know them. A sharp pain—half anger and half regret—caught at Eddie's heart.

"You're awfully quiet," Henry said. They were passing over a canal bridge, its stonework sides carved with runes.

"Just wondering how much trouble I'll be in when I get back. I had to climb out a window to leave, but Amatis has probably noticed I'm gone by now."

Henry frowned. "Why sneak out? Wouldn't you be allowed to go see your brother?"

"I'm not supposed to be in Alicante at all," Eddie said. "I'm supposed to be home, watching safely from the sidelines."

"Ah. That explains a lot."

"Does it?" Eddie cast a curious sideways glance at him. Blue shadows were caught in his dark hair.

"Everyone seemed to blanch when your name came up earlier. I gathered there was some bad blood between your brother and you."

"Bad blood? Well, that's one way to put it."

"You don't like him much?"

"*Like Ben?*" Eddie had never stopped to think whether he liked his newfound brother or not.

"Sorry. He's family—it's not really about whether you like him or not."

"I do like him," Eddie said, surprising himself. "I do; it's just—I don't like calling myself his brother. It seems like he's betraying his real family."

"Real family?"

"The Denbroughs," Eddie answered.

Henry stared at him but didn't say anything else.

They turned off the street into a wide cobble-paved square ringed with tall, narrow buildings. At the center was the bronze statue of an angel—the Angel, the one who'd given his blood to make the race of Shadowhunters. At the northern end of the square was a massive structure of white stone. A waterfall of wide marble steps led up to a pillared arcade, behind which was a pair of huge double doors. The overall effect in the evening light was stunning—and weirdly familiar. Edsie wondered if he'd seen a picture of this place before. Maybe his mother had painted one?

"This is Angel Square," Henry said, "and that was the Great Hall of the Angel. The Accords were first signed there, since Downworlders aren't allowed into the Gard—now it's called the Accords Hall. It's a central meeting place—celebrations take place there, marriages, dances, that sort of thing. It's the center of the city. They say all roads lead to the Hall."

"It looks a bit like a church—but you don't have churches here, do you?"

"No need," said Henry. "The demon towers keep us safe. We need nothing else. That's why I like coming here. It feels ... peaceful."

Eddie looked at him in surprise. "So you don't live here?"

"No. I live in Paris. I'm just visiting Max—she's my cousin. My mother and her father, my uncle Neil, were brother and sister. Max's parents ran the Institute in Beijing for years. They moved back to Alicante about a decade ago."

"Were they—the Mayfields weren't in the Circle, were they?"

A startled look flashed across Henry's face. He was silent as they turned and left the square behind them, making their way into a warren of dark streets. "Why would you ask that?" he said finally.

"Well—because the Denbroughs were."

They passed under a streetlight. Eddie glanced sideways at Henry. In his long dark coat and white shirt, under the pool of white light, he looked like a black-and-white illustration of a gentleman from a Victorian scrapbook. His dark hair curled close against his temples in a way that made her itch to draw him in pen and ink. "You have to understand," he said. "A good half of the young Shadowhunters in Derry were part of the Circle, and plenty of those who weren't in Derry too. Uncle Neil was in the early days, but he got out of the Circle once he started to realize how serious Pennywise was. Neither of Max's parents was part of the Uprising—my uncle went to Beijing to get away from Pennywise and met Max's mother at the Institute there. When the Denbroughs and the other Circle members were tried for treason against the Clave, the Mayfields voted for leniency. Got them sent away to New York instead of cursed. So the Denbroughs have always been grateful."

"What about your parents?" Eddie said. "Were they in it?"

"Not really. My mother was younger than Neil—he sent her to Paris when he went to Beijing. She met my father there."

"Your mother was younger than Neil?"

"She's dead," said Henry. "My father, too. My aunt Élodie brought me up."

"Oh," Eddie said, feeling stupid. "I'm sorry."

"I don't remember them," Henry said. "Not really. When I was

younger, I wished I had an older sister or a brother, someone who could tell me what it was like having them as parents.” He looked at Eddie thoughtfully. “Can I ask you something, Eddie? Why did you come to Derry at all when you knew how badly everyone would take it?”

Before Eddie could answer him, they emerged from the narrow alley they’d been following into a familiar unlit courtyard, the disused well at its center gleaming in the moonlight. “Cistern Square,” Henry said, an unmistakable note of disappointment in his voice. “We got here faster than I thought we would.”

Eddie glanced over the masonry bridge that spanned the nearby canal. He could see Amatis’s house in the distance. All the windows were lit. He sighed. “I can get back myself from here, thanks.”

“You don’t want me to walk you to the—”

“No. Not unless you want to get in trouble too.”

“You think *I’d* get in trouble? For being gentlemanly enough to walk you home?”

“No one’s supposed to know I’m in Alicante,” he said. “It’s supposed to be a secret. And no offense, but you’re a stranger.”

“I’d like not to be,” he said. “I’d like to get to know you better.” He was looking at Eddie with a mixture of amusement and a certain shyness, as if he wasn’t sure how what he’d just said would be received.

“Henry,” he said, with a sudden feeling of overwhelming tiredness. “I’m glad you want to get to know me. But I just don’t have the energy to get to know you. Sorry.”

“I didn’t mean—”

But Eddie was already walking away from him, toward the bridge. Halfway there he turned around and glanced back at Henry. He was looking oddly forlorn in a patch of moonlight, his dark hair falling over his face.

“Kali Prasad,” Eddie said.

Henry stared at him. “What?”

“You asked me why I came here even though I wasn’t supposed to,” Eddie said. “My mother is sick. Really sick. Maybe dying. The only thing that can help her, the only *person* who can help her, is a witch named Kali Prasad. Only I have no idea where to find her.”

“Eddie—”

Eddie turned back toward the house. “Good night, Henry.”

9. Where Angels Fear to Tread

Something *was* wrong. Beverly held two fingers the throbbing vein at her temple. "What are you talking about?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since that night at the Hunter's Moon. I don't think he made it home at all."

"Wait, he went home?" Stan had a strict eleven-thirty curfew, if he made it later, his mom would've called the police by then.

"At like ten he said he was busted and had to go home," Mike said. There's a silent *but* lingering there.

"What?" Beverly asked.

"His mom called me this morning. She said Stan isn't answering his phone and asked me when he was coming home from my house."

"Stan lied to you?"

Mike is quiet. Beverly realized how she must have sounded. *Accusatory*. Because Stan had lied to her too, hadn't he? He said he would text her or call her anytime, and yet, nothing happened.

"I told you," Mike says. "Something's seriously wrong. I've been blowing up Stan's phone, but he's not answering. I'm thinking of driving over there so his mom can keep calling people."

She could tell Mike wanted her to come with him to Stan's. But she couldn't, not now. Not when Kay was staring back at her with a confused yet happy expression. "He's probably fine Mike, I mean...you know how he is."

"Isn't Eddie here? I called him too, but..."

"He's not, he's uh..." Beverly glanced quickly at Kay, who was listening everyword, she made kissing gestures at her but Beverly was too worried to even care about it. "He's in Derry, he has been there for like three days now."

"Oh," Mike sounded disappointed. "Well, maybe you're right. Maybe it's nothing. Sorry for sounding so paranoid, you probably have far more interesting things to do."

"Trust me, I don't." Beverly said loud enough for Kay to hear. "I'll call you later?"

"Sure. Bye, Bev—I mean, *Beverly*. Sorry."

After Mike ended the call, Beverly looked at her screen. Stan had grabbed her phone one night, taken a picture of himself making a grotesque "derp face," and saved it as her wallpaper. She never bothered to change it, because it made her laugh every time she looked at it.

She texted him: *Where are you?? This isn't funny.*

"Trouble in paradise?" Kay smirked.

Beverly rolled her eyes, then sighed. "More like, *disaster*."

Bill shut the door of the small attic room behind him and turned to face Richie. His eyes were normally the color of Lake Lyn, a pale, untroubled blue, but the color tended to change with his moods. At the moment they were the color of the East River during a thunderstorm. His expression was stormy as well. "Sit," he said to Richie, pointing at a low chair near the gabled window. "I'll get the bandages."

Richie sat. The room he shared with Bill at the top of the Mayfields' house was small, with two narrow beds in it, one against each wall. Their clothes hung from a row of pegs on the wall. There was a single window, letting in faint light—it was getting dark now, and the sky outside the glass was indigo blue. Richie watched as Bill knelt to grab the duffel bag from under his bed and yank it open. He rummaged noisily among the contents before getting to his feet with a box in his hands. Richie recognized it as the box of medical supplies they used sometimes when runes weren't an option—antiseptic, bandages, scissors, and gauze.

“Aren’t you going to use a healing rune?” Richie asked, more out of curiosity than anything else.

“No. You can just—” Bill broke off, flinging the box onto the bed with an inaudible curse. He went to the small sink against the wall and washed his hands with such force that water splashed upward in a fine spray. Richie watched him with a distant curiosity. His hand had begun to burn with a dull and fiery ache.

Bill retrieved the box, pulled a chair up opposite Richie’s, and flung himself down onto it. “Give me your hand.”

Richie held his hand out. He had to admit it looked pretty bad. All four knuckles were split open like red starbursts. Dried blood clung to his fingers, a flaking red-brown glove.

Bill made a face. “You’re an i-idiot.”

“Thanks,” Richie said. He watched patiently as Bill bent over his hand with a pair of tweezers and gently nudged at a bit of glass embedded in his skin. “So, why not?”

“Why not what?”

“Why not use a healing rune? This isn’t a demon injury.”

“Because.” Bill retrieved the blue bottle of antiseptic. “I think it would do you good to feel the pain. You can heal like a m-mundane. Slow and ugly. Maybe you’ll learn something.” He splashed the stinging liquid over Richie’s cuts. “Although I doubt it.”

“I can always do my own healing rune, you know.”

Bill began wrapping a strip of bandages around Richie’s hand. “Only if you w-want me to tell the Mayfields what really happened to their window, instead of letting them think it was an a-accident.” He jerked a knot in the bandages tight, making Richie wince. “You know, if I’d thought you were going to d-do this to yourself, I would never have told you anything.”

“Yes, you would have.” Richie cocked his head to the side. “I didn’t realize my attack on the picture window would upset you quite so

much.”

“It’s just—” Done with the bandaging, Bill looked down at Richie’s hand, the hand he was still holding between his. It was a white club of bandages, spotted with blood where Bill’s fingers had touched it. “W-why do you do these things to yourself? Not just what you d-did to the window, but the way you talked to Eddie. What are you punishing yourself for? Y-you can’t help how you feel.”

Richie’s voice was even. “How do I feel?”

“I see how you look at him.” Bill’s eyes were remote, seeing something just past Richie, something that wasn’t there. “And I don’t see the problem.”

Richie looked at him steadily. “If you were in love with someone, would you choose to let them go?”

Bill’s head jerked back. “I don’t—I’m not—”

“I asked *if*. Don’t go all dramatic on me.”

Bill shook his head. “I guess it d-depends, if what we have is right.”

“I hope you don’t mean me,” Richie said.

Bill went white and drew back, as if he were preparing to ward off a blow. “W-what do you mean?”

“I know how you think you feel about me,” Richie said. “You don’t, though. You just like me because I’m safe. There’s no risk. And then you never have to try to have a real relationship, because you can use me as an excuse.” Richie knew he was being cruel, and he barely cared. Hurting people he loved was almost as good as hurting himself when he was in this kind of mood.

“I get it,” Bill said tightly. “First Eddie, then your hand, now me. To h-hell with you, Richie.”

“You don’t believe me?” Richie asked. “Fine. Go ahead. Kiss me right now.”

Bill stared at him in horror.

“Exactly. Despite my staggering good looks, you actually don’t like me that way. Love makes us liars,” said Richie. “The Seelie Queen told us that. So don’t judge me for lying about how I feel. You do it too.” He stood up. “And now I want you to do it again.”

Bill’s face was stiff with hurt. “What do you mean?”

“Lie for me,” Richie said, taking his jacket down from the wall peg and shrugging it on. “It’s sunset. They’ll start coming back from the Gard about now. I want you to tell everyone I’m not feeling well and that’s why I’m not coming downstairs. Tell them I felt faint and tripped, and that’s how the window got broken.”

Bill tipped his head back and looked up at Richie squarely. “Fine,” he said. “If you t-tell me where you’re really going.”

“Up to the Gard,” said Richie. “I’m going to break Stan out of jail.”

It was harder climbing *up* the trellis than it had been climbing down. Eddie’s boots slipped a number of times on the damp stone wall, and he was relieved when he finally hauled himself up over the sill of the window and half-jumped, half-fell into the bedroom.

His euphoria was short-lived. No sooner had his boots hit the floor than a bright light flared up, a soft explosion that lit the room to a daylight brightness.

Amatis was sitting on the edge of the bed, her back very straight, a witchlight stone in her hand. It burned with a harsh light that did nothing to soften the hard planes of her face or the lines at the corners of her mouth. She stared at Eddie in silence. Finally she said, “In those clothes, you look just like Jimothy.”

Eddie scrambled to his feet. “I—I’m sorry,” he said. “About going out like that—”

Amatis closed her hand around the witchlight, snuffing its glow. Eddie blinked in the sudden dimness. “Change out of that gear,”

Amatis said, “and meet me downstairs in the kitchen. And don’t even think about sneaking back out through the window,” she added, “or the next time you return to this house, you’ll find it sealed against you.”

Swallowing hard, Eddie nodded.

Amatis rose to her feet and left without another word. Quickly Eddie shucked off his gear and dressed in his own clothes, which hung over the bedpost, now dry—his jeans were a little stiff, but it was nice to pull on his familiar T-shirt.

The last time he’d seen the lower floor of Amatis’s house, he’d been delirious and hallucinating. He remembered long corridors stretching out to infinity and a huge grandfather clock whose ticks had sounded like the beats of a dying heart. Now he found himself in a small, homely living room, with plain wooden furniture and a rag rug on the floor. The small size and bright colors reminded him a little of his own living room at home in Brooklyn. He crossed through in silence and entered the kitchen, where a fire burned in the grate and the room was full of warm yellow light. Amatis was sitting at the table. She had a blue shawl wrapped around her shoulders; it made her hair seem more gray.

“Hi.” Eddie hovered in the doorway. He couldn’t tell if Amatis was angry or not.

“I suppose I hardly need to ask where you went,” Amatis said, without looking up from the table. “You went to see Jonathan, didn’t you? I suppose it was only to be expected. Perhaps if I’d ever had children of my own, I’d know when a child was lying to me. But I had so hoped that, this time at least, I wouldn’t *completely* disappoint my brother.”

“Disappoint Jim?”

“You know what happened when he was bitten?” Amatis stared straight in front of him. “When my brother was bitten by a werewolf—and of course he was: Pennywise was always taking stupid risks with himself and his followers; it was just a matter of time—he came and told me what had happened and how scared he was that he

might have contracted the lycanthropic disease. And I said ... I said ...”

“Amatis, you don’t have to tell me this—”

“I told him to get out of my house and not to come back until he was sure he didn’t have it. I cringed away from him—I couldn’t help it.” Her voice shook. “He could see how disgusted I was; it was all over my face. He said he was afraid that if he did have it, if he’d become a were-creature, that Pennywise would ask him to kill himself, and I said ... I said that maybe that would be the best thing.”

Eddie gave a little gasp; he couldn’t help it.

Amatis looked up quickly. Self-loathing was written all over her face. “Jim was always so basically *good*, whatever Pennywise tried to get him to do—sometimes I thought he and Sonia were the only really good people I knew—and I couldn’t stand the idea of him being turned into some monster....”

“But he’s not like that. He’s not a monster.”

*I didn’t *know*. After he did Change, after he fled from here, Sonia worked and worked to convince me that he was still the same person inside, still my brother. If it hadn’t been for her, I never would have agreed to see him again. I let him stay here when he came before the Uprising—let him hide in the cellar—but I could tell he didn’t really trust me, not after I’d turned my back on him. I think he still doesn’t.”

“He trusted you enough to come to you when I was sick,” Eddie said. “He trusted you enough to leave me here with you—”

“He had nowhere else to go,” said Amatis. “And look how well I’ve fared with you. I couldn’t even keep you in the house for a single day.”

Eddie flinched. This was worse than being yelled at. “It’s not your fault. I lied to you and sneaked out. There wasn’t anything you could have done about it.”

“Oh, Eddie,” Amatis said. “Don’t you see? There’s *always* something

you can do. It's just people like me who always tell themselves otherwise. I told myself there was nothing I could do about Jim. I told myself there was nothing I could do about Will leaving me. And I refuse even to attend the Clave's meetings because I tell myself there's nothing I can do to influence their decisions, even when I hate what they do. But then when I do choose to do something—well, I can't even do that one thing right." Her eyes shone, hard and bright in the firelight. "Go to bed, Eddie," she finished. "And from now on, you can come and go as you please. I won't do anything to stop you. After all, like you said, there's nothing I *can* do."

"Amatis—"

"Don't." Amatis shook her head. "Just go to bed. Please." Her voice held a note of finality; she turned away, as if Eddie were already gone, and stared at the wall, unblinking.

Eddie spun on his heel and ran up the stairs. In the spare room he kicked the door shut behind him and flung himself down onto the bed. He'd thought he wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn't come. *Richie hates me*, he thought. *Amatis hates me. Beverly hates me. I never got to say good-bye to Stan. My mother's dying. And Jim has abandoned me. I'm alone. I've never been so alone, and it's all my own fault.* Maybe that was why he couldn't cry, he realized, staring dry-eyed at the ceiling. Because what was the point in crying when there was no one there to comfort you? And what was worse, when you couldn't even comfort yourself?

Out of a dream of blood and sunlight, Stan woke suddenly to the sound of a voice calling his name.

"Stan." The voice was a hissing whisper. "Stan, *get up.*"

Stan was on his feet—sometimes how fast he could move now surprised even him—and spinning around in the darkness of the cell. "Stephen?" he whispered, staring into the shadows. "Stephen, was that you?"

"Turn around, Stan." Now the voice, faintly familiar, held a note of

irritability. “And come to the window.” Stan knew immediately who it was and looked through the barred window to see Richie kneeling on the grass outside, a witchlight stone in his hand. He was looking at Stan with a strained scowl. “What, did you think you were having a nightmare?”

“Maybe I still am.” There was a buzzing in Stan’s ears—if he’d had a heartbeat, he would have thought it was the blood rushing through his veins, but it was something else, something less corporeal but more proximate than blood.

The witchlight threw a crazy-quilt pattern of light and shadow across Richie’s pale face. “So here’s where they put you. I didn’t think they even used these cells anymore.” He glanced sideways. “I got the wrong window at first. Gave your friend in the next cell something of a shock. Attractive fellow, what with the beard and the rags. Kind of reminds me of the street folk back home.”

And Stan realized what the buzzing sound in his ears was. Rage. In some distant corner of his mind he was aware that his lips were drawn back, the tips of his fangs grazing his lower lip. “I’m glad you think all this is funny.”

“You’re *not* happy to see me, then?” Richie said. “I have to say, I’m surprised. I’ve always been told my presence brightened up any room. One might think that went doubly for dank underground cells.”

“You knew what would happen, didn’t you? ‘They’ll send you right back to New York,’ you said. No problem. But they never had any intention of doing that.”

“I didn’t know.” Richie met his eyes through the bars, and his gaze was clear and steady. “I know you won’t believe me, but I thought I was telling you the truth.”

“You’re either lying or stupid—”

“Then I’m stupid.”

“—or both,” Stan finished. “I’m inclined to think both.”

"I don't have a reason to lie to you. Not now." Richie's gaze remained steady. "And quit baring your fangs at me. It's making me nervous."

"Good," Simon said. "If you want to know why, it's because you smell like blood."

"It's my cologne. Eau de Recent Injury." Richie raised his left hand. It was a glove of white bandages, stained across the knuckles where blood had seeped through.

Stan frowned. "I thought your kind didn't get injuries. Not ones that lasted."

"I put it through a window," Richie said, "and Bill's making me heal like a mundane to teach me a lesson. There, I told you the truth. Impressed?"

"No," Stan said. "I have bigger problems than you. The Inquisitor keeps asking me questions I can't answer. He keeps accusing me of getting my Daylighter powers from Pennywise. Of being a spy for him."

Alarm flickered in Richie's eyes. "Brenner said that?"

"Brenner implied the whole Clave thought so."

"That's bad. If they decide you're a spy, then the Accords don't apply. Not if they can convince themselves you've broken the Law." Richie glanced around quickly before returning his gaze to Stan. "We'd better get you out of here."

"And then what?" Stan almost couldn't believe what he was saying. He wanted to get out of this place so badly he could taste it, yet he couldn't stop the words tumbling out of his mouth. "Where do you plan on hiding me?"

"There's a Portal here in the Gard. If we can find it, I can send you back through—"

"And everyone will know you helped me. Richie, it's not just me the Clave is after. In fact, I doubt they care about one Downworlder at all one way or the other. They're trying to prove something about your

family—about the Denbroughs. They're trying to prove that they're connected with Pennywise somehow. That they never really left the Circle."

Even in the darkness, it was possible to see the color rush into Richie's cheeks. "But that's ridiculous. They fought Pennywise on the ship—Zack nearly died—"

"The Inquisitor wants to believe that they sacrificed the other Nephilim who fought on the boat to preserve the illusion that they were against Pennywise. But they still lost the Mortal Sword, and that's what he cares about. Look, you tried to warn the Clave, and they didn't care. Now the Inquisitor is looking for someone to blame everything on. If he can brand your family as traitors, then no one will blame the Clave for what happened, and he'll be able to make whatever policies he wants without opposition."

Richie put his face in his hands, his long fingers tugging distractedly at his hair. "But I can't just leave you here. If Eddie finds out—"

"I should have known that's what you were worried about." Stan laughed harshly. "So don't tell him. He's in New York, anyway, thank —" He broke off, unable to say the word. "You were right," he said instead. "I'm glad he's not here."

Richie lifted his head out of his hands. "What?"

"The Clave is insane. Who knows what they'd do to him if they knew what he could do. You were right," Stan repeated, and when Richie said nothing in reply, added, "and you might as well enjoy that I just said that to you. I probably won't ever say it again."

Richie stared at him, his face blank, and Stan was reminded with an unpleasant jolt of the way Richie had looked on the ship, bloody and dying on the metal floor.

Finally, Richie spoke. "So you're telling me you plan to stay here? In prison? Until when?"

"Until we think of a better idea," said Stan. "But there is one thing."

Richie raised his eyebrows. "What's that?"

“Blood,” said Stan. “The Inquisitor’s trying to starve me into talking. I already feel pretty weak. By tomorrow I’ll be—well, I don’t know how I’ll be. But I don’t want to give in to him. Animal blood will do.”

“Blood I can get you,” Richie said. He hesitated. “Did you...What did you say to Brenner of the Denbroughs?”

“That they're innocent, I didn't want you to get into trouble.”

Jace’s eyes shone with reflected light. “Look, vampire,” he said. “Protect the Denbroughs if you can. But don’t protect me.”

Stan raised his head. “Why not?”

“I suppose,” said Richie—and for a moment, as he looked down through the bars, Stan could almost imagine that he were outside, and Richie were the one inside the cell—“because I don’t deserve it.”

10. The Noose Tightens

Eddie woke to a sound like hailstones on a metal roof. He sat up in bed, staring around groggily. The sound came again, a sharp rattle-thump emanating from the window. Peeling his blanket back reluctantly, he went to investigate.

Throwing the window open let in a blast of cold air that cut through his pajamas like a knife. He shivered and leaned out over the sill.

Someone was standing in the garden below, and for a moment, with a leap of his heart, all he saw was that the figure was slender and tall, with boyish, rumpled hair. Then he raised his face and Eddie saw that the hair was shorter, and he realized that for the second time, he'd hoped for Richie and gotten Henry instead.

He was holding a handful of pebbles in one hand. He smiled when he saw Eddie poke his head out, and gestured at himself and then at the rose trellis. *Climb downstairs.*

Eddie shook his head and pointed toward the front of the house. *Meet me at the front door.* Shutting the window, Eddie hurried downstairs. It was late morning—the light pouring in through the windows was strong and golden—but the lights were all off and the house was quiet. *Amatis must still be asleep*, he thought.

Eddie went to the front door, unbolted it, and threw it open. Henry was there, standing on the front step, and once again he had that feeling, that strange burst of recognition, though it was fainter this time. Eddie smiled weakly at him. “You threw stones at my window,” he said. “I thought people only did that in movies.”

Henry grinned. “Nice pajamas. Did I wake you up?”

“Maybe.”

“Sorry,” he said, though he didn't seem sorry. “But this couldn't wait. You might want to run upstairs and get dressed, by the way. We'll be spending the day together.”

"Wow. Confident, aren't you?" Eddie said, but then boys who looked like Henry probably had no reason to be anything but confident. Eddie shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I can't. I can't leave the house. Not today."

A faint line of concern appeared between his eyes. "You left the house yesterday."

"I know, but that was before—" *Before Amatis made me feel about two inches tall.* "I just can't. And please don't try to argue me out of it, okay?"

"Okay," he said. "I won't argue. But at least let me tell you what I came here to tell you. Then, I promise, if you still want me to go, I'll go."

"What is it?" He raised his face, and Eddie wondered how it was possible that dark eyes could glow just like golden ones.

"I know where you can find Kali Prasad."

It took Eddie less than ten minutes to run upstairs, throw on his clothes, scribble a hasty note to Amatis, and rejoin Henry, who was waiting for him at the edge of the canal. He grinned as Eddie ran to meet him, breathless, his green coat flung over one arm. "I'm here," he said, skidding to a stop. "Can we go now?"

Henry insisted on helping him on with the coat. "I don't think anyone's ever helped me with my coat before," Eddie observed. "Well, maybe waiters. Were you ever a waiter?"

"No, but I was brought up by a Frenchwoman," Henry reminded him. "It involved an even more rigorous course of training."

Eddie smiled, despite his nervousness. Henry was good at making him smile, he realized with a faint sense of surprise. Almost too good at it. "Where are we going?" Eddie asked abruptly. "Is Prasad's house near here?"

"She lives outside the city, actually," said Henry, starting toward the bridge.

Eddie fell into step beside him. "Is it a long walk?"

"Too long to walk. We're going to get a ride."

"A ride? From who?" He came to a dead stop. "Henry, we have to be careful. We can't trust just anyone with the information about what we're doing—what *I'm* doing. It's a secret."

Henry regarded him with thoughtful dark eyes. "I swear on the Angel that the friend we'll be getting a ride from won't breathe a word to anyone about what we're doing."

"You're sure?"

"I'm very sure."

Kali Prasad, Eddie thought as they weaved through the crowded streets. *I'm going to see Kali Prasad*. Wild excitement clashed with trepidation—Rena had made her sound formidable. What if she had no patience with him, no time? What if he couldn't make her believe he was who he said he was? What if she didn't even *remember* his mother?

It didn't help his nerves that every time he passed a man with long dark hair his insides tensed up as he thought he recognized Richie, but he was doubtless back at the Mayfields', necking with his new girlfriend.

"You worried about being followed?" Henry asked as they turned down a side street that led away from the city center, noticing the way Eddie kept glancing around.

"I keep thinking I see people I know," he admitted. "Richie or the Denbroughs."

"I don't think Richie has left the Mayfields' since they got here. He mostly seems to be skulking in his room. He hurt his hand pretty badly yesterday too—"

"Hurt his hand? How?" Eddie, forgetting to look where he was going, stumbled over a rock. The road they'd been walking on had somehow turned from cobblestones to gravel without him noticing. "Ouch."

"We're here," Henry announced, stopping in front of a high wood-and-wire fence. There were no houses around—they had rather abruptly left the residential district behind, and there was only this fence on one side and a gravelly slope leading away toward the forest on the other.

There was a door in the fence, but it was padlocked. From his pocket Henry produced a heavy steel key and opened the gate. "I'll be right back with our ride." He swung the gate shut behind him. Eddie put his eye to the slats. Through the gaps he could glimpse what looked like a low-slung red clapboard house. Though it didn't appear to really have a door—or proper windows—

The gate opened, and Henry reappeared, grinning from ear to ear. He held a lead in one hand: Pacing docilely behind him was a huge gray and white horse with a blaze like a star on his forehead.

"A *horse*? You have a horse?" Eddie stared in amazement. "Who has a horse?"

Henry stroked the horse fondly on the shoulder. "A lot of Shadowhunter families keep a horse in the stables here in Alicante. If you've noticed, there are no cars in Derry. They don't work well with all these wards around." He patted the pale leather of the horse's saddle, emblazoned with a crest of arms that depicted a water serpent rising out of a lake in a series of coils. The name Bowers was written beneath in delicate script. "Come on up."

Eddie backed up. "I've never ridden a horse before."

"I'll be riding Wayfarer," Henry reassured him. "You'll just be sitting in front of me." The horse grunted softly. He had huge teeth, Eddie noticed uneasily; each one the size of a PEZ dispenser. Eddie imagined those teeth sinking into his leg.

Be brave, he told himself. *It's what your mother would do.*

He took a deep breath. "All right. Let's go."

Eddie's resolution to be brave lasted as long as it took for Henry—

after helping him into the saddle—to swing himself up onto the horse behind him and dig in his heels. Wayfarer took off like a shot, pounding over the graveled road with a force that sent jolting shocks up his spine. Eddie clutched at the bit of the saddle that stuck up in front of him, his nails digging into it hard enough to leave marks in the leather.

The road they were on narrowed as they headed out of town, and now there were banks of thick trees on either side of them, walls of green that blocked any wider view. Henry drew back on the reins, and the horse ceased his frantic galloping, Eddie's heartbeat slowing along with his pace. As his panic receded, he became slowly conscious of Henry behind him—he was holding the reins on either side of Eddie, his arms making a sort of cage around him that kept him from feeling like he was about to slide off the horse. Eddie was suddenly very aware, not just of the hard strength in the arms that held him but that he was leaning back against Henry's chest and that he smelled of, for some reason, black pepper. Not in a bad way—it was spicy and pleasant, very different from Richie's smell of soap and sunlight. Not that sunlight had a smell, really, but if it did—

Eddie gritted his teeth. He was here with Henry, on his way to see a powerful warlock, and mentally he was maundering on about the way Richie smelled. He forced herself to look around. The green banks of trees were thinning out and now he could see a sweep of marbled countryside to either side. It was beautiful in a stark sort of way: a carpet of green broken up here and there by a scar of gray stone road or a crag of black rock rising up out of the grass. Clusters of delicate white flowers, the same ones he'd seen in the necropolis with Jim, starred the hills like occasional snowfall.

"How did you find out where Kali Prasad is?" he asked as Henry skillfully guided the horse around a rut in the road.

"My aunt Élodie. She's got quite a network of informants. She knows everything that's going on in Derry, even though she never comes here herself. She hates to leave the Institute."

"What about you? Do you come to Derry much?"

"Not really. The last time I was here I was about five years old. I

haven't seen my aunt and uncle since then either, so I'm glad to be here now. It gives me a chance to catch up. Besides, I miss Derry when I'm not here. There's nowhere else like it. It's in the earth of the place. You'll start to feel it, and then you'll miss it when you're not here."

"I know Ben missed it," Eddie said. "But I thought that was because he lived here for years. He was brought up here."

"In the Hanscom manor," Henry said. "Not that far from where we're going, in fact."

"You do seem to know everything."

"Not *everything*," Henry said with a laugh that Eddie felt through his back. "Yeah, Derry works its magic on everyone—even those like Ben who have reason to hate the place."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, he was brought up by Pennywise, wasn't he? And that must have been pretty awful."

"I don't know." Eddie hesitated. "The truth is, he has mixed feelings about it. I think Pennywise was a horrible father in a way, but in another way the little bits of kindness and love he did show were all the kindness and love Ben ever knew." He felt a wave of sadness as he spoke. "I think he remembered Pennywise with a lot of affection, for a long time."

"I can't believe Pennywise ever showed Ben kindness or love. Pennywise's a monster."

"Well, yes, but Ben is his son. And he was just a little boy. I think Pennywise did love him, in his way—"

"No." Henry's voice was sharp. "I'm afraid that's impossible."

Eddie blinked and almost turned around to see his face, but then thought better of it. All Shadowhunters were sort of crazy on the topic of Pennywise—he thought of the Inquisitor and shuddered inwardly—and he could hardly blame them. "You're probably right."

"We're here," Henry said abruptly—so abruptly that Eddie wondered if he really had offended him somehow—and slid down from the horse's back. But when Henry looked up at him, he was smiling. "We made good time," he said, tying the reins to the lower branch of a nearby tree. "Better than I thought we would."

He indicated with a gesture that Eddie should dismount, and after a moment's hesitation Eddie slid off the horse and into his arms. He clutched him as Henry caught him, his legs unsteady after the long ride. "Sorry," Eddie said sheepishly. "I didn't mean to grab you."

"I wouldn't apologize for *that*." His breath was warm against his neck, and Eddie shivered. Henry's hands lingered just a moment longer on his back before he reluctantly let Eddie go.

All this wasn't helping Eddie's legs feel any steadier. "Thanks," Eddie said, knowing full well he was blushing, and wishing heartily that his fair skin didn't show color so readily. "So—this is it?" He looked around. They were standing in a small valley between low hills. There were a number of gnarled-looking trees ranged around a clearing. Their twisted branches had a sculptural beauty against the steel blue sky. But otherwise ... "There's nothing here," he said with a frown.

"Eddie. *Concentrate*."

"You mean—a glamour? But I don't usually have to—"

"Glamours in Derry are often stronger than they are elsewhere. You may have to try harder than you usually do." Henry put his hands on Eddie's shoulders and turned him gently. "Look at the clearing."

Eddie silently performed the mental trick that allowed him to peel glamour from the thing it disguised. He imagined himself rubbing turpentine on a canvas, peeling away layers of paint to reveal the true image underneath—and there it was, a small stone house with a sharply gabled roof, smoke twisting from the chimney in an elegant curlicue. A winding path lined with stones led up to the front door. As he looked, the smoke puffing from the chimney stopped curling upward and began to take on the shape of a wavering black question mark.

Henry laughed. "I think that means, *Who's there?*"

Eddie pulled his coat closer around him. The wind blowing across the level grass wasn't that brisk, but there was ice in his bones nevertheless. "It looks like something out of a fairy tale."

"Are you cold?" Henry put an arm around him. Immediately the smoke curling from the chimney stopped forming itself into question marks and began puffing out in the shape of lopsided hearts. Eddie ducked away from him, feeling both embarrassed and somehow guilty, as if he'd done something wrong. He hurried toward the front walk of the house, Henry just behind him. They were halfway up the front path when the door flew open.

Despite having been obsessed with finding Kali Prasad ever since Rena had told him her name, Eddie had never stopped to picture what she might look like. A large, long haired woman, he would have thought, if he'd thought about it at all. Someone who looked older but beautiful. But the person who stepped out of the front door was tall and thin, with short, spiky dark hair. She was wearing a gold mesh vest and a pair of silk pajama pants. She regarded Eddie with mild interest, puffing gently on a fantastically large pipe as she did so. Though she looked nothing at all old, she was instantly and totally familiar.

Jane Ives.

"But ..." Henry seemed as astonished as Eddie. He was staring at Eleven with his mouth slightly open, a blank look on his face. Finally he stammered, "Are you—Kali Prasad? The warlock?"

Eleven took the pipe out of her mouth. "Well, I'm certainly not Kali Prasad the exotic dancer."

"I ..." Henry seemed at a loss for words. Eddie wasn't sure what he'd been expecting, but Eleven was a lot to take in. "We were hoping you could help us. I'm Henry Bowers, and this is Edward Gray—his mother is Sonia Henderson—"

"I don't care who her mother is," Jane said. "You can't see me without an appointment. Come back later. Next March would be

good.”

“March?” Henry looked horrified.

“You’re right,” Eleven said. “Too rainy. How about June?”

Henry drew himself upright. “I don’t think you understand how important this is—”

“Henry, don’t bother,” Eddie said in disgust. “She’s just messing with your head. She can’t help us, anyway.”

Henry only looked more confused. “But I don’t see why she can’t—”

“All right, that’s enough,” Eleven said, and snapped her fingers once.

Henry froze in place, his mouth still open, his hand partially outstretched.

“*Henry!*” Eddie reached out to touch him, but he was as rigid as a statue. Only the slight rise and fall of his chest showed that he was even still alive. “Henry?” he said again, but it was hopeless: He knew somehow that Henry couldn’t see or hear him. Eddie turned on Eleven. “I can’t believe you just did that. What on earth is *wrong* with you? Has whatever’s in that pipe melted your brain? Henry’s on our side.”

“I don’t have a side, Eddie darling,” she said with a wave of her pipe. “And really, it’s your own fault I had to freeze him for a short while. You were awfully close to telling him I’m not Kali Prasad.”

“That’s because you’re *not* Kali Prasad.”

Eleven blew a stream of smoke out of her mouth and regarded him thoughtfully through the haze. “Come on,” she said. “Let me show you something.”

She held the door of the small house open, gesturing him inside. With a last, disbelieving glance at Henry, Eddie followed her.

The interior of the cottage was unlit. The faint daylight streaming in through the windows was enough to show Eddie that they stood

inside a large room crowded with dark shadows. There was an odd smell in the air, as of burning garbage. He made a faint choking noise as Jane raised her hand and snapped her fingers once again. A bright blue light bloomed from her fingertips.

Eddie gasped. The room was a shambles—furniture smashed into splinters, drawers opened and their contents scattered. Pages ripped from books drifted in the air like ash. Even the window glass was shattered.

“I got a message from Prasad last night,” said Jane, “asking me to meet her here. I turned up here—and found it like this. Everything destroyed, and the stench of demons all around.”

“Demons? But demons can’t come into Derry—”

“I didn’t say they have. I’m just telling you what happened.” Jane spoke without inflection. “The place stank of something demonic in origin. Kali’s body was on the floor. She hadn’t been dead when they left her, but she was dead when I arrived.” She turned to him. “Who knew you were looking for her?”

“Rena,” Eddie whispered. “But she’s dead. Henry, Richie, and Stan. The Denbroughs—”

“Ah,” Jane said. “If the Denbroughs know, the Clave may well know by now, and Pennywise has spies in the Clave.”

“I should have kept it a secret instead of asking everyone about her,” Eddie said in horror. “This is my fault. I should have warned Prasad —”

“Might I point out,” said Eleven, “that you couldn’t find Prasad, which is in fact why you were asking people about her. Look, Rena—and you—just thought of Prasad as someone who could help your mother. Not someone Pennywise might be interested in beyond that. But there’s more to it. Pennywise might not have known how to wake up your mother, but he seems to have known that what she did to put herself in that state had a connection to something he wanted very much. A particular spell book.”

"How do you know all this?" Eddie asked.

"Because Kali told me."

"But—"

She cut him off with a gesture. "Warlocks have ways of communicating with each other. They have their own languages." She raised the hand that held the blue flame. "*Logos*."

Letters of fire, each at least six inches tall, appeared on the walls as if etched into the stone with liquid gold. The letters raced around the walls, spelling out words Eddie couldn't read. He turned to Eleven. "What does it say?"

"Kali did this when she knew she was dying. It tells whatever warlock comes after her what happened." As Eleven turned, the glow of the burning letters lit her cat eyes to gold. "She was attacked here by servants of Pennywise. They demanded the Book of the White. Aside from the Gray Book, it's among the most famous volumes of supernatural work ever written. Both the recipe for the potion Sonia took and the recipe for the antidote to it are contained in that book."

Eddie's mouth dropped open. "So was it here?"

"No. It belonged to your mother. All Kali did was advise her where to hide it from Pennywise."

"So it's—"

"It's at the Hanscom family manor. The Hanscoms had their home very close to where Sonia and Pennywise lived; they were their nearest neighbors. Kali suggested that your mother hide the book in their home, where Pennywise would never look for it. In the library, as a matter of fact.

"But Pennywise lived in the Hanscom manor for years after that," Eddie protested. "Wouldn't he have found it?"

"It was hidden inside another book. One he was unlikely to ever open." Eleven smiled crookedly. "*Simple Recipes for Housewives*. No one can say your mother didn't have a sense of humor."

“So have you gone to the Hanscom manor? Have you looked for the book?”

Eleven shook her head. “Eddie, there are misdirection wards on the manor. They don’t just keep out the Clave; they keep out everyone. Especially Downworlders. Maybe if I had time to work on them, I could crack them, but—”

“Then no one can get into the manor?” Despair clawed at his chest. “It’s impossible?”

“I didn’t say no one,” She said. “I can think of at least one person who could almost certainly get into the manor.”

“You mean Pennywise?”

“I mean,” said Eleven, “His son.”

Eddie shook his head. “Ben won’t help me, Eleven. He doesn’t want me here. In fact, I doubt he’s speaking to me at all.”

Eleven looked at him meditatively. “I think,” he said, “there isn’t much that he wouldn’t do for you, if you asked him.”

“Say I can convince Ben to come to the manor with me and get the book,” he said. “Then what? I don’t know how to cast a spell, or make an antidote—”

Eleven snorted. “Did you think I was giving you all this advice for free? Once you get hold of the Book of the White, I want you to bring it straight to me.”

“The book? *You* want it?”

“It’s one of the most powerful spell books in the world. Of course I want it. Besides, it belongs, by right, to Lilith’s children, not Raziel’s. It’s a warlock book and should be in warlock hands.”

“But I need it—to cure my mother—”

“You need one page out of it, which you can keep. The rest is mine. And in return, when you bring me the book, I’ll make up the antidote

for you and administer it to Sonia. You can't say it's not a fair deal." She held out a hand. "Shake on it?"

After a moment's hesitation Eddie shook. "I'd better not regret this."

"I certainly hope not," Eleven said, turning cheerfully back toward the front door. On the walls the fire letters were already fading. "Regret is such a pointless emotion, don't you agree?"

11. What Is and What Should Never Be

Notes for the Chapter:

Second update of the day XD

The sun outside seemed especially bright after the darkness of the cottage. Eddie stood blinking as the view swam into focus: the mountains in the distance, Wayfarer contentedly munching grass, and Henry immobile as a lawn statue, one hand still outstretched. Eddie turned to Eleven. "Could you unfreeze him now, please?"

Eleven looked amused. "I was surprised when I got Henry's message this morning," she said. "Saying he was doing a favor for you, no less. How did you wind up meeting him?"

"He's a cousin of some friends of the Denbroughs or something. He's nice, I promise."

"Nice? He's gorgeous." Eleven gazed dreamily in his direction. "You should leave him here. I could hang hats on him and things."

"No. You can't have him."

"Why not? Do you *like* him?" Eleven's eyes gleamed. "He seems to like you. I saw him going for your hand out there like a squirrel diving for a peanut."

"Why don't we talk about *your* love life?" Eddie countered. "I'm pretty sure you have, or at least *had* one."

She shrugged. "Nothing too interesting." But there was something on her voice, something that reminded Eddie of the times he asked his mother about her life. Sadness. The yearning of forgetting.

"Look, if you don't unfreeze Henry, then I can never leave here, and you'll never get the Book of the White."

"Oh, all right, all right. But if I might make a request? Don't tell him any of what I just told you, friend of the Denbroughs or not." Eleven snapped her fingers petulantly.

Henry's face came alive, like a video flashing back to action after it had been paused. "—help us," he said. "This isn't just some minor problem. This is life and death."

"You Nephilim think all your problems are life and death," said Eleven. "Now go away. You've begun to bore me."

"But—"

"Go," Eleven said, a dangerous tone to her voice. Blue sparks glittered at the tips of her long fingers, and there was suddenly a sharp smell in the air, like burning. Eleven's cat eyes glowed. Even though he knew it was an act, Eddie couldn't help but back away.

"I think we should go, Henry," he said.

Henry's eyes were narrow. "But, Eddie—"

"We're going," he insisted, and, grabbing him by the arm, half-dragged him toward Wayfarer. Reluctantly, Henry followed him, muttering under his breath. With a sigh of relief, Eddie glanced back over his shoulder. Eleven was standing at the door to the cottage, her arms folded across her chest. Catching his eye, she grinned and dropped one eyelid in a single, glittering wink.

"I'm sorry, Eddie." Henry had a hand on Eddie's shoulder and another on his waist as he helped Eddie up onto Wayfarer's broad back. Eddie fought down the little voice inside his head that warned him not to get back onto the horse—or any horse—and let the horse hoist him up. He swung a leg over and settled himself in the saddle, telling himself he was balancing on a large, moving sofa and not on a living creature that might turn around and bite him at any moment.

"Sorry about what?" Eddie asked as Henry swung up behind him. It was almost annoying how easily he did it—as if he were dancing—but comforting to watch. He clearly knew what he was doing, Eddie thought as Henry reached around him to take the reins. Eddie supposed it was good that one of them did.

"About Kali Prasad. I wasn't expecting her to be that unwilling to help. Although, warlocks are capricious. You've met one before,

haven't you?"

"I met Jane Ives." Eddie twisted around momentarily to look past Henry at the cottage receding into the distance behind them. The smoke was puffing out of the chimney in the shape of little dancing figures. Dancing Janes? He couldn't tell from here. "She's the High Witch of Brooklyn."

"Is she much like Prasad?"

"Shockingly similar. But my best friend, Beverly, is a witch too. And she's not like that."

Henry wrinkled his nose. "You're friends with a *warlock*?"

"Why do you say it like that?"

Henry's confused look vanished. "I just—I don't know. They're immortal, you know? While you grow old she's going to stop aging at some point. I wouldn't want friends like that."

"That doesn't matter. It's all right about Prasad, though. I knew there was a chance she'd refuse to help us."

"But I promised you help." Henry sounded genuinely upset. "Well, at least there's something else I can show you, so the day won't have been a complete waste of time."

"What is it?" Eddie twisted around again to look up at him. The sun was high in the sky behind him, firing the strands of his dark hair with an outline of gold.

Henry grinned. "You'll see."

As they rode farther away from Alicante, walls of green foliage whipped by on either side, giving way every so often to improbably beautiful vistas: frost blue lakes, green valleys, gray mountains, silver slivers of river and creek flanked by banks of flowers. Eddie wondered what it would be like to live in a place like this. He couldn't help but feel nervous, almost exposed, without the comfort

of tall buildings closing him in.

Not that there were no buildings at all. Every once in a while the roof of a large stone building would rise into view above the trees. These were manor houses, Henry explained (by shouting in his ear): the country houses of wealthy Shadowhunter families. They reminded Eddie of the big old mansions along the Hudson River, north of Manhattan, where rich New Yorkers had spent their summers hundreds of years ago.

The road beneath them had turned from gravel to dirt. Eddie was jerked out of his reverie as they crested a hill and Henry pulled Wayfarer up short. "This is it," he said.

Eddie stared. "It" was a tumbled mass of charred, blackened stone, recognizable only by outline as something that had once been a house: There was a hollow chimney, still pointing toward the sky, and a chunk of wall with a glassless window gaping in its center. Weeds grew up through the foundations, green among the black. "I don't understand," Eddie said. "Why are we here?"

"You don't know?" Henry asked. "This was where your mother and father lived. Where your brother was born. This was the Henderson manor."

Not for the first time, Eddie heard Keene's voice inside his head. *Pennywise set a great fire and burned himself to death along with his family, his wife, and his child. Scorched the land black. No one will build there still. They say the land is cursed.*

Without another word Eddie slid from the horse's back. He heard Henry call out to him, but he was already half-running, half-sliding down the low hill. The ground evened out where the house had once stood; the blackened stones of what had once been a walkway lay dry and cracked at his feet. In among the weeds he could see a set of stairs that ended abruptly a few feet from the ground.

"Eddie—" Henry followed him through the weeds, but he was barely aware of his presence. Turning in a slow circle, he took it all in. Burned, half-dead trees. What had probably once been a shady lawn, stretching away down a sloping hill. He could see the roof of what

was probably another nearby manor house in the distance, just above the tree line. The sun sparked off broken bits of window glass in the one full wall that was still standing. He stepped into the ruins over a shelf of blackened stones. He could see the outline of rooms, of doorways—even a scorched cabinet, almost intact, flung on its side with smashed bits of china spilling out, mixing with the black earth.

Once this had been a real house, inhabited by living, breathing people. His mother had lived here, gotten married here, had a baby here. And then Pennywise had come and turned it all to dust and ash, leaving Sonia thinking her son was dead, leading her to hide the truth about the world from her second one...

A sense of piercing sadness invaded Eddie. More than one life had been wrecked in this place. He put his hand to his face and was almost surprised to find it damp: He had been crying without knowing it.

“Eddie, I’m sorry. I thought you’d want to see this.” It was Henry, crunching toward him across the rubble, his boots kicking up puffs of ash. He looked worried.

Eddie turned to him. “Oh, I do. I did. Thank you.”

The wind had picked up. It blew strands of Henry's dark hair across his face. He gave a rueful smile. “It must be hard to think about everything that happened in this place, about Pennywise, about your mother—she had incredible courage.”

“I know,” Eddie said. “She did. She does.”

He touched Eddie's face lightly. “So do you.”

“Henry, you don’t know anything about me.”

“That’s not true.” His other hand came up, and now he was cupping Eddie's face. His touch was gentle, almost tentative. “I’ve heard all about you, Eddie. About the way you fought your father for the Mortal Cup, the way you went into that vampire-infested hotel after your friend. Ben’s told me stories, and I’ve heard rumors, too. And ever since the first one—the first time I heard your name—I’ve

wanted to meet you. I knew you'd be extraordinary."

Eddie laughed shakily. "I hope you're not too disappointed."

"No," Henry breathed, sliding his fingertips under Eddie's chin. "Not at all." He lifted Eddie's face to his. Eddie was too surprised to move, even when Henry leaned toward him and he realized, belatedly, what Henry was doing: Reflexively, Eddie shut his eyes as Henry's lips brushed gently over his, sending shivers through him. A sudden fierce longing to be held and kissed in a way that would make him forget everything else surged through him. Eddie put his arms up, twining them around Henry's neck, partly to steady himself and partly to draw him closer.

Henry's hair tickled his fingertips, not silky like Richie's but fine and soft, and *Eddie shouldn't be thinking about Richie*. He pushed back thoughts of him as Henry's fingers traced Eddie's cheeks and the line of his jaw. His touch was gentle, despite the calluses on his fingertips. Of course, Richie had the same calluses from fighting; probably all Shadowhunters had them—

Eddie clamped down on the thought of Richie, or tried to, but it was no good. He could see him even with his eyes closed—see the sharp angles and planes of a face he could never properly draw, no matter how much the image of it had burned itself into his mind; see the delicate bones of his hands, the scarred skin of his shoulders—

The fierce longing that had surged up in Eddie so swiftly receded with a sharp recoil that was like an elastic band springing back. He went numb, even as Henry's lips pressed down on his and his hands moved to cup the back of his neck—Eddie went numb with an icy shock of wrongness. Something was terribly wrong, something even more than his hopeless longing for someone he couldn't have. This was something else: a sudden jolt of horror, as if he'd been taking a confident step forward and suddenly plunged into a black void.

He gasped and jerked away from Henry with such force that he almost stumbled. If Henry hadn't been holding him, he would have fallen.

"Eddie." His eyes were unfocused, his cheeks flushed with a high

bright color. “Eddie, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” His voice sounded thin to his own ears. “Nothing—it’s just, I shouldn’t have—I’m not really ready—”

“Did we go too fast? We can take it slower—” He reached for him, and before he could stop himself, Eddie flinched away. Henry looked stricken. “I’m not going to hurt you, Eddie.”

“I know.”

“Did something happen?” His hand came up, stroked Eddie’s hair back; Eddie bit back the urge to jerk away. “Did Richie—”

“*Richie?*” Did Henry know he’d been thinking about Richie; had he been able to tell? And at the same time ... “Why would you bring him up like that? What do you mean?”

“I just thought—” He shook his head, pain and confusion chasing each other across his features. “That maybe someone else had hurt you.”

His hand was still on Eddie’s cheek; Eddie reached up and gently but firmly detached it, returning it to his side. “No. Nothing like that. I just—” He hesitated. “It felt wrong.”

“Wrong?” The hurt on his face vanished, replaced by disbelief. “Eddie, we have a connection. You know we do. Since the first second I saw you—”

“Henry, *don’t*—”

“I felt like you were someone I’d always been waiting for. I saw you felt it too. Don’t tell me you didn’t.”

But that *hadn’t* been what he’d felt. Eddie had felt as if he’d walked around a corner in a strange city and suddenly seen his own brownstone looming up in front of him. A surprising and not entirely pleasant recognition, almost: *How can this be here?*

“I didn’t,” he said.

The anger that rose in Henry's eyes—sudden, dark, uncontrolled—took Eddie by surprise. He caught Eddie's wrists in a painful grasp. "That's not true."

Eddie tried to pull away. "Henry—"

"It's *not true*." The blackness of his eyes seemed to have swallowed up the pupils. His face was like a white mask, stiff and rigid.

"Henry," he said as calmly as he could. "You're hurting me."

Henry let go of him. His chest was rising and falling rapidly. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry. I thought—"

Well, you thought wrong, Eddie wanted to say, but he bit the words back. He didn't want to see that look on his face again. "We should go back," he said instead. "It'll be dark soon."

Henry nodded numbly, seeming as shocked by his outburst as Eddie was. He turned and headed back toward Wayfarer, who was cropping grass in the long shadow of a tree. Eddie hesitated a moment, then followed him—there didn't seem to be anything else he could do. He glanced down surreptitiously at his own wrists as he fell into step behind him—they were ringed with red where Henry's fingers had gripped him, and more strangely, his fingertips were smudged black, as if Eddie had somehow stained them with ink.

Henry was silent as he helped him up onto Wayfarer's back. "I'm sorry if I implied anything about Richie," he said finally as Eddie settled himself in the saddle. "He would never do anything to hurt you. I know it's for your sake that he's been visiting that vampire prisoner in the Gard—"

It was as if everything in the world ground to a sudden halt. Eddie could hear his own breath whistling in and out of his ears, saw his hands, frozen like the hands of a statue, lying still against the saddle pommel. "Vampire prisoner?" he whispered.

Henry turned a surprised face up to his. "Yes," he said, "Stan, that vampire they brought over with them from New York. I thought—I mean, I was sure you knew all about it. Didn't Richie tell you?"

Stan woke to sunlight glinting brightly off an object that had been shoved through the bars of his window. He got to his feet, his body aching with hunger, and saw that it was a metal flask, about the size of a lunchbox thermos. A rolled-up bit of notepaper had been tied around the neck. Plucking it down, Stan unrolled the paper and read:

Stan: This is cow blood, fresh from the butcher's. Hope it's all right. Richie told me what you said, and I want you to know I think it's really brave. Just hang in there and we'll figure out a way to get you out. - Ben

Stan smiled. Good to know Ben's flamboyant affection hadn't suffered under the current circumstances. He unscrewed the flask's top and had swallowed several mouthfuls before a sharp prickling sensation between his shoulder blades made him turn around.

Adrian stood calmly in the center of the room. He had his hands clasped behind his back, his slight shoulders set. He was wearing a sharply pressed white shirt and a dark jacket. A gold chain glittered at his throat.

Stan almost gagged on the blood he was drinking. He swallowed hard, still staring. "You—you can't be here."

Adrian's smile somehow managed to give the impression that his fangs were showing, even though they weren't. "Don't panic, Daylighter."

"I'm not panicking." This wasn't strictly true. Stan felt as if he'd swallowed something sharp. He hadn't seen Adrian since the night he'd clawed himself, bloody and bruised, out of a hastily dug grave in Queens. He still remembered Adrian throwing packets of animal blood at him, and the way he'd torn into them with his teeth as if he were an animal himself. It wasn't something he liked to remember. He would have been happy never to see the vampire boy again. "The sun's still up. How are you here?"

"I'm not." Adrian's voice was smooth as butter. "I am a Projection. Look." He swung his hand, passing it through the stone wall beside

him. "I am like smoke. I cannot hurt you. Of course, neither can you hurt me."

"I don't want to hurt you." Stan set the flask down on the cot. "I *do* want to know what you're doing here."

"You left New York very suddenly, Daylighter. You do realize that you're supposed to inform the head vampire of your local area when you're leaving the city, don't you?"

"Head vampire? You mean you? I thought the head vampire was someone else—"

"Camille has not yet returned to us," Adrian said, without any apparent emotion. "I lead in her stead. You'd know all this if you'd bothered to get acquainted with the laws of your kind."

"My leaving New York wasn't exactly planned in advance. And no offense, but I don't really think of you as my kind."

"*Dios.*" Adrian lowered his eyes, as if hiding amusement. "You are stubborn."

"How can you say that?"

"It seems obvious, doesn't it?"

"I mean—" Stan's throat closed up. "That word. You can say it, and I can't say—" *God.*

Adrian's eyes flashed upward; he did look amused. "Age," he said. "And practice. And faith, or its loss—they are in some ways the same thing. You will learn, over time, little fledgling."

"Don't *call* me that."

"But it is what you are. You're a Child of the Night. Isn't that why Pennywise captured you and took your blood? Because of what you are?"

"You seem pretty well informed," Stan said. "Maybe you should tell me."

Adrian's eyes narrowed. "I have also heard a rumor that you drank the blood of a Shadowhunter and that is what gave you your gift, your ability to walk in sunlight. Is it true?"

Stan's hair prickled. "That's ridiculous. If Shadowhunter blood could give vampires the ability to walk in daylight, everyone would know it by now. Nephilim blood would be at a premium. And there would never be peace between vampires and Shadowhunters after that. So it's a good thing it isn't true."

A faint smile turned up the edges of Adrian's mouth. "True enough. Speaking of premiums, you do realize, don't you, Daylighter, that you are a valuable commodity now? There isn't a Downworlder on this earth who doesn't want to get their hands on you."

"Does that include you?"

"Of course it does."

"And what would you do if you did get your hands on me?"

Adrian shrugged his slight shoulders. "Perhaps I am alone in thinking that the ability to walk in the daylight might not be such a gift as other vampires believe. We are the Children of the Night for a reason. It is possible that I consider you as much of an abomination as humanity considers me."

"Do you?"

"It's possible." Adrian's expression was neutral. "I think you're a danger to us all. A danger to vampirekind, if you will. And you can't stay in this cell forever, Daylighter. Eventually you'll have to leave and face the world again. Face me again. But I can tell you one thing. I will swear to do you no harm, and not try to find you, if you in turn swear to hide yourself away once Brenner releases you. If you swear to go so far away that no one will ever find you, and to never again contact anyone you knew in your mortal life. I can't be more fair than that."

But Stan was already shaking his head. "I can't leave my family. Or my friends."

Adrian made an irritable noise. "They are no longer part of who you are. You're a vampire now."

"But I don't want to be," said Stan.

"Look at you, complaining," said Adrian. "You will never get sick, never die, and be strong and young forever. You will never age. What have you got to complain about?"

Young forever, Stan thought. It sounded good, but did anyone really want to be sixteen forever? It would have been one thing to be frozen forever at twenty-five, but sixteen? To always be this gangly, to never really grow into himself, his face or his body? Not to mention that, looking like this, he'd never be able to go into a bar and order a drink. Ever. For eternity.

"And," Adrian added, "you do not even have to give up the sun."

Stan had no desire to go down that road again. "I heard the others talking about you in the Dumort," he said. "I know you put on a cross every Sunday and go to see your family. I bet they don't even know you're a vampire. So don't tell me to leave everyone in my life behind. I won't do it, and I won't lie and say I will."

Adrian's eyes glittered. "What my family believes doesn't matter. It's what *I* believe. What I know. A true vampire knows he is dead. He accepts his death. But you, you think you are still one of the living. It is that which makes you so dangerous. You cannot acknowledge that you are no longer alive."

12. The Gates of Hell

It was twilight when Eddie shut the door of Amatis's house behind him and threw the bolts home. He leaned against the door for a long moment in the shadowy entryway, his eyes half-shut. Exhaustion weighed down every one of his limbs, and his legs ached painfully.

"Eddie?" Amatis's insistent voice cut through the silence. "Is that you?"

Eddie stayed where he was, adrift in the calming darkness behind his closed eyes. He wanted so badly to be home, he could almost taste the metallic air of the Brooklyn streets. He could see his mother sitting in her chair by the window, dusty, pale yellow light streaming in through the open apartment windows, illuminating her canvas as she painted. Homesickness twisted in his gut like pain.

"Eddie." The voice came from much closer this time. Eddie's eyes snapped open. Amatis was standing in front of him, her gray hair pulled severely back, her hands on her hips. "Richard Tozier is here to see you. He's waiting in the kitchen."

"*Richie* is here?" Eddie fought to keep his rage and astonishment off his face. There was no point showing how angry he was in front of Jim's sister.

Amatis was looking at him curiously. "Should I not have let him in? I thought you'd want to see him."

"No, it's fine," Eddie said, maintaining his even tone with some difficulty. "I'm just tired."

"Huh." Amatis looked as if he didn't believe it. "Well, I'll be upstairs if you want me. I need a nap."

Eddie couldn't imagine what he'd want Amatis for, but he nodded and limped down the corridor into the kitchen, which was awash with bright light. There was a bowl of fruit on the table—oranges, apples, and pears—and a loaf of thick bread along with butter and cheese, and a plate beside it of what looked like ... cookies? Had

Amatis actually made *cookies*?

At the table sat Richie. He was leaning forward on his elbows, his dark hair tousled, his shirt slightly open at the neck. Eddie could see the thick banding of black Marks tracing his collarbone. Richie held a cookie in his bandaged hand. So Henry was right; he *had* hurt himself. Not that Eddie cared.

“Good,” Richie said, “you’re back. I was beginning to think you’d fallen into a canal.”

Eddie just stared at him, wordless. He wondered if Richie could read the anger in his eyes. He leaned back in the chair, throwing one arm casually over the back of it. If it hadn’t been for the rapid pulse at the base of his throat, Eddie might almost have believed his air of unconcern.

“You look exhausted,” he said. “Where have you been all day?”

“I was out with Henry.”

“*Henry?*” Richie’s look of utter astonishment was momentarily gratifying.

“He walked me home last night,” Eddie said, and in his mind the words *I’ll just be your friend from now on, just your friend* beat like the rhythm of a damaged heart. “And so far, he’s the only person in this city who’s been remotely nice to me. So yes, I was out with Henry.”

“I see.” Richie set his cookie back down on the plate, his face blank. “Eddie, I came here to apologize. I shouldn’t have spoken to you the way I did.”

“No,” Eddie said. “You shouldn’t have.”

“I also came to ask you if you’d reconsider going back to New York.”

“God,” Eddie said. “This again—”

“It’s not safe for you here.”

“What are you worried about?” Eddie asked tonelessly. “That they’ll

throw me in prison like they did with Stan?”

Richie’s expression didn’t change, but he rocked back in his chair, the front legs lifting off the floor, almost as if Eddie had shoved him. “Stan—?”

“Henry told me what happened to him,” Eddie went on in the same flat voice. “What you did. How you brought him here and then let him just get thrown in jail. Are you trying to get me to hate you?”

“And you trust Henry?” Richie asked. “You barely know him, Eddie.”

Eddie stared at him. “Is it *not* true?”

He met Eddie’s gaze, but his face had gone still, like Henry’s face when he’d pushed him away. “It’s true.”

Eddie seized a plate off the table and flung it at him. He ducked, sending the chair spinning, and the plate hit the wall above the sink and shattered in a starburst of broken porcelain. Richie leaped out of the chair as Eddie picked up another plate and threw it, his aim going wild: This one bounced off the refrigerator and hit the floor at Richie’s feet where it cracked into two even pieces. “How could you? Stan trusted you. Where is he now? What are they going to do to him?”

“Nothing,” Richie said. “He’s all right. I saw him last night—”

“Before or after I saw you? Before or after you pretended everything was all right and you were just fine?”

“You came away from *that* thinking I was just fine?” Richie choked on something almost like a laugh. “I must be a better actor than I thought.”

There was a twisted smile on his face. It was a match to the tinder of Eddie’s rage: How *dare* he laugh right now? Eddie scrabbled for the fruit bowl, but it suddenly didn’t seem like enough. He kicked the chair out of the way and flung himself at him, knowing it would be the last thing he’d expect Eddie to do.

The force of his sudden assault caught Richie off guard. Eddie

slammed into him and Richie staggered backward, fetching up hard against the edge of the counter. Eddie half-fell against him, heard him gasp, and drew back Eddie's arm blindly, not even knowing what he intended to do.

Eddie had forgotten how fast Richie was. Eddie's fist slammed not into his face, but into his upraised hand; Richie wrapped his fingers around his, forcing his arm back down to his side. Eddie was suddenly aware of how close they were standing; he was leaning against Richie, pressing him back against the counter with the slight weight of his body. "Let go of my hand."

"Are you really going to hit me if I do?" Richie's voice was rough and soft, his eyes blazing.

"Don't you think you deserve it?"

Eddie felt the rise and fall of his chest against him as Richie laughed without amusement. "Do you think I planned all this? Do you really think I'd do that?"

"Well, you don't like Stan, do you? Maybe you never have."

Richie made a harsh, incredulous sound and let go of Eddie's hand.

"Henry told me that you brought Stan here, and then Bill marched him up to the Gard. Let the Clave have him. You must have known—" Eddie continued.

"I brought him here by *accident*. I asked him to come to the Institute so I could talk to him. About you, actually. I thought maybe he could convince you to drop the idea of coming to Derry. If it's any consolation, he wouldn't even consider it. While he was there, we were attacked by Forsaken. I had to drag him through the Portal with me. It was that or leave him there to die."

"But why bring him to the Clave? You must have known—"

"The reason we sent him there was because the only Portal in Derry is in the Gard. They told us they were sending him back to New York."

“And you *believed* them? After what happened with the Inquisitor?”

“Eddie, the Inquisitor was an anomaly. That might have been your first experience with the Clave, but it wasn’t mine—the Clave is *us*. The Nephilim. They abide by the Law.”

“Except they didn’t.”

“No,” Richie said. “They didn’t.” He sounded very tired.

Eddie was silent, first because he could think of nothing to say, and then in startlement as Richie reached out—almost as if he wasn’t thinking about what he was doing—and drew Eddie toward him. To Eddie’s surprise, he let him. Through the white material of his shirt Eddie could see the outlines of his Marks, black and curling, stroking across his skin like licks of flame. Eddie wanted to lean his head against him, wanted to feel Richie’s arms around him the way he’d wanted air when he was drowning in Lake Lyn.

“He might be right that things need fixing,” he said finally. “But he’s not right about the way they should be fixed. You can see that, can’t you?”

Richie half-closed his eyes. There were crescents of gray shadow under them, he saw, the remnants of sleepless nights. “I’m not sure I can see anything. You’re right to be angry, Eddie. I shouldn’t have trusted the Clave. I wanted so badly to think that the Inquisitor was an abnormality, that she was acting without their authority, that there was still some part of being a Shadowhunter I could trust.”

“Richie,” he whispered.

Richie opened his eyes and looked down at him. Eddie and Richie were pressed so close together even their knees were touching, and Eddie could feel his heartbeat. *Move away from him*, he told himself, but his legs wouldn’t obey.

“What is it?” Richie said, his voice very soft.

“I want to see Stan,” he said. “Can you take me to see him?”

As abruptly as Richie had caught hold of Eddie, he let him go. “No.

You're not even supposed to be in Derry. You can't go waltzing into the Gard."

"But he'll think everyone's abandoned him. He'll think—"

"I went to see him," Richie said. "I was going to let him out. I was going to tear the bars out of the window with my hands." His voice was matter-of-fact. "But he wouldn't let me."

"He wouldn't *let* you? He wanted to stay in jail?"

"He said the Inquisitor was sniffing around after my family, after me. Brenner wants to blame what happened in New York on us. He can't grab one of us and torture it out of us—the Clave would frown on that—but he's trying to get Stan to tell him some story where we're all in cahoots with Pennywise. Stan said if I break him out, then the Inquisitor will know I did it, and it'll be even worse for the Denbroughs."

"That's very noble of him and all, but what's his long-range plan? To stay in jail forever?"

Richie shrugged. "We hadn't exactly worked that out."

Eddie blew out an exasperated breath. "All right, look. What you need is an alibi. We'll make sure you're somewhere everyone can see you, and the Denbroughs are too, and then we'll get Eleven to break Stan out of prison and get him back to New York."

"I hate to tell you this, Eddie, but there's no way Eleven would do that, she's not going to go directly against the Clave as a favor to us."

"She might," Eddie said, "for the Book of the White."

Richie blinked. "The *what*?"

Quickly, Eddie told him about Kali Prasad's death, about Eleven showing up in Prasad's place, and about the spell book. Richie listened with stunned attentiveness until Eddie finished.

"Demons?" he said. "Eleven said Prasad was killed by demons?"

Eddie cast his mind back. “No—she said the place stank of something demonic in origin. And that Prasad was killed by Pennywise’s servants. That’s all she said.”

“Some dark magic leaves an aura that reeks like demons,” Richie said. “If Eleven wasn’t specific, it’s probably because she’s none too pleased that there’s a warlock out there practicing dark magic, breaking the Law. But it’s hardly the first time Pennywise’s gotten one of Lilith’s children to do his nasty bidding. Remember the warlock kid he killed in New York?”

“Pennywise used his blood for the Ritual. I remember.” Eddie shuddered. “Richie, does Pennywise want the book for the same reason I do? To wake my mother up?”

“He might. Or if it’s what Eleven says it is Pennywise might just want it for the power he could gain from it. Either way, we’d better get it before he does.”

“Do you think there’s any chance it’s in the Hanscom manor?”

“I know it’s there,” he said, to Eddie’s surprise. “That cookbook? *Recipes for Housewives* or whatever? I’ve seen it before. In the manor’s library. It was the only cookbook in there.”

“How did you know?”

“Wentworth used to take me there whenever there was a party, I was nine but I still remember everything.”

Eddie felt dizzy. “Richie—if you take me to the manor, and we get the book, I’ll go home with Stan. Do this for me and I’ll go to New York, and I won’t come back, I swear.”

“Eleven was right—there are misdirection wards on the manor,” he said slowly. “I’ll take you there, but it’s not close. Walking, it might take us five hours.”

Eddie reached out and drew Richie’s stele out of its loop on his belt. He held it up between them, where it glowed with a faint white light not unlike the light of the glass towers. “Who said anything about walking?”

"You get some strange visitors, Daylighter," Stephen said. "First Richard Tozier, and now the head vampire of New York City. I'm impressed."

Stan was sitting on the floor in the center of the room, turning the empty flask in his hands over and over idly. "I guess I'm more important than I realized."

"And Jonathan Gray bringing you blood," Stephen said. "That's quite a delivery service."

Jonathan Gray? It took Stan a moment to realize this meant, of course, Ben. His head went up. "How do you know Ben brought it? I didn't say anything—"

"I saw him through the window. He looks just like his mother," said Stephen, "at least, the way his mother did years ago." There was an awkward pause. "You know the blood is only a stopgap," he added. "Pretty soon the Inquisitor will start wondering if you've starved to death yet. If he finds you perfectly healthy, he'll figure out something's up and kill you anyway."

Stan looked up at the ceiling. The runes carved into the stone overlapped one another like shingled sand on a beach. "I guess I'll just have to believe Richie when he says they'll find a way to get me out," he said. When Stephen said nothing in return, he added, "I'll ask him to get you out too, I promise. I won't leave you down here."

Stephen made a choked noise, like a laugh that couldn't quite make it out of his throat. "Oh, I don't think Richard Tozier is going to want to rescue *me*," he said. "Besides, starving down here is the least of your problems, Daylighter. Soon enough Pennywise will attack the city, and then we'll likely all be killed."

Stan blinked. "How can you be so sure?"

"I was close to him at one point. I knew his plans. His goals. He intends to destroy Alicante's wards and strike at the Clave from the heart of their power."

“But I thought no demons could get past the wards. I thought they were impenetrable.”

“So it’s said. It requires demon blood to take the wards down, you see, and it can only be done from inside Alicante. But because no demon can get through the wards—well, it’s a perfect paradox, or should be. But Pennywise claimed he’d found a way to get around that, a way to break through. And I believe him. He will find a way to take the wards down, and he will come into the city with his demon army, and he will kill us all.”

The flat certainty in Stephen’s voice sent a chill up Stan’s spine. “You sound awfully resigned. Shouldn’t you do something? Warn the Clave?”

“I did warn them. When they interrogated me. I told them over and over again that Pennywise meant to destroy the wards, but they dismissed me. The Clave thinks the wards will stand forever because they’ve stood for a thousand years. But so did Rome, till the barbarians came. Everything falls someday.” He chuckled: a bitter, angry sound. “Consider it a race to see who kills you first, Daylighter—Pennywise, the other Downworlders, or the Clave.”

Somewhere between *here* and *there* Eddie’s hand was torn out of Richie’s. When the hurricane spit him out and he hit the floor, he hit it alone, hard, and rolled gasping to a stop.

Eddie sat up slowly and looked around. He was lying in the center of a Persian rug thrown over the floor of a large stone-walled room. There were items of furniture here and there; the white sheets thrown over them turned them into humped, unwieldy ghosts. Velvet curtains sagged across huge glass windows; the velvet was gray-white with dust, and motes of dust danced in the moonlight.

“Eddie?” Richie emerged from behind a massive white-sheeted shape; it might have been a grand piano. “Are you all right?”

“Fine.” He stood up, wincing a little. His elbow ached. “Aside from the fact that Amatis will probably kill me when we get back.

Considering that I smashed all her plates and opened up a Portal in her kitchen.”

Richie reached his hand down to him. “For whatever it’s worth,” he said, helping Eddie to his feet, “I was very impressed.”

“Thanks.” Eddie glanced around. “So this is where Ben grew up? It’s like something out of a fairy tale.”

“I was thinking a horror movie,” Richie said. “God, it’s been years since I’ve seen this place. It didn’t use to be so—”

“So cold?” Eddie shivered a little. He buttoned his coat, but the cold in the manor was more than physical cold: The place *felt* cold, as if there had never been warmth or light or laughter inside it.

“No,” said Richie. “It was always cold. I was going to say *dusty*.” He took a witchlight stone out of his pocket, and it flared to life between his fingers. Its white glow lit his face from beneath, picking out the shadows under his cheekbones, the hollows at his temples. “This is the study, and we need the library. Come on.”

He led Eddie from the room and down a long corridor lined with dozens of mirrors that gave back their own reflections. Eddie hadn’t realized quite how disheveled he looked: his own coat streaked with dust, his hair snarled from the wind. He tried to smooth it down discreetly and caught Richie’s grin in the next mirror. For some reason, due doubtless to a mysterious Shadowhunter magic Eddie didn’t have a hope of understanding, *his* hair looked perfect.

The corridor was lined with doors, some open; through them Eddie could glimpse other rooms, as dusty and unused-looking as the study had been. Daniel Hanscom had had no relatives, Pennywise had said, so Eddie supposed no one had inherited this place after his “death”—he had assumed Pennywise had carried on living here, but that seemed clearly not to be the case. Everything breathed sorrow and disuse. At Renwick’s, Pennywise had called this place home, had showed it to Ben in the Portal mirror, a gilt-edged memory of green fields and mellow stone, but that, Eddie thought, had been a lie too. It was clear Pennywise hadn’t really lived here in years—perhaps he had just left it here to rot, or he had come here only occasionally, to

walk the dim corridors like a ghost.

They reached a door at the end of the hallway and Richie shouldered it open, standing back to let Eddie pass into the room before him. He had been picturing the library at the Institute, and this room was not entirely unlike it: the same walls filled with row upon row of books, the same ladders on rolling casters so the high shelves could be reached. The ceiling was flat and beamed, though, not conical, and there was no desk. Green velvet curtains, their folds iced with white dust, hung over windows that alternated panes of green and blue glass. In the moonlight they sparkled like colored frost. Beyond the glass, all was black.

“This is the library?” Eddie said to Richie in a whisper, though he wasn’t sure why he was whispering. There was something so profoundly still about the big, empty house.

Richie was looking past him, his eyes dark with memory. “I used to sit in that window seat and read whatever my father had assigned me that day. Different languages on different days—French on Saturday, English on Sunday—but I can’t remember now what day Latin was, if it was Monday or Tuesday....”

Eddie had a sudden flashing image of Richie as a little boy, book balanced on his knees as he sat in the window embrasure, looking out over—over what? Were there gardens? A view? A high wall of thorns like the wall around Sleeping Beauty’s castle? Eddie saw him as he read, the light that came in through the window casting squares of blue and green over his hair and the small face more serious than any ten-year-old’s should be.

“I can’t remember,” Richie said again, staring into the dark.

Eddie touched his shoulder. “It doesn’t matter, Richie.”

“I suppose not.” He shook himself, as if waking out of a dream, and moved across the room, the witchlight lighting his way. He knelt down to inspect a row of books and straightened up with one of them in his hand. “*Simple Recipes for Housewives*,” he said. “Here it is.”

Eddie hurried across the room and took it from him. It was a plain-

looking book with a blue binding, and dusty, like everything in the house. When he opened it, dust swarmed up from its pages like a gathering of moths.

A large, square hole had been cut out of the center of the book. Fitted into the hole like a jewel in a bezel was a smaller volume, about the size of a small chapbook, bound in white leather with the title printed in gilded Latin letters. Eddie recognized the words for “white” and “book,” but when he lifted it out and opened it, to his surprise the pages were covered with thin, spidery handwriting in a language he couldn’t understand.

“Greek,” Richie said, looking over his shoulder. “Of the ancient variety.”

“Can you read it?”

“Not easily,” he admitted. “It’s been years. But Eleven will be able to, I imagine.” He closed the book and slipped it into the pocket of Eddie’s green coat before turning back to the bookshelves, skimming his fingers along the rows of books, his fingertips tracing their spines.

“Are there any of these you want to take with you?” Eddie asked gently. “If you’d like—”

Richie laughed and dropped his hand. “I was only allowed to read what I was assigned,” he said. “Some of the shelves had books on them I wasn’t even allowed to touch.” He indicated a row of books, higher up, bound in matching brown leather. “I read one of them once, when I was about six, just to see what the fuss was about. It turned out to be a journal my father was keeping. Notes about my mom, and me.”

Eddie had already reached up and yanked one of the books out from the forbidden shelf, knocking it to the ground. It made a satisfying thump. “Eddie!”

“Oh, come on.” Eddie did it again, knocking another book down, and then another. Dust puffed up from their pages as they hit the floor. “You try.”

Richie looked at him for a moment, and then a half smile teased the corner of his mouth. Reaching up, he swept his arm along the shelf, knocking the rest of the books to the ground with a loud crash. He laughed—and then broke off, lifting his head, like a cat pricking up its ears at a distant sound. “Do you hear that?”

Hear what? Eddie was about to ask, and stopped himself. There was a sound, getting louder now—a high-pitched whirring and grinding, like the sound of machinery coming to life. The sound seemed to be coming from inside the wall. He took an involuntary step back just as the stones in front of them slid back with a groaning, rusty scream. An opening gaped behind the stones—a sort of doorway, roughly hacked out of the wall.

Beyond the doorway was a set of stairs, leading down into darkness.

13. How Are Thou Fallen

It was late afternoon when Beverly felt like she was about to throw up. The one hour trip back to Brooklyn was a long one, it consisted of Kay listening to the same four Lady Gaga songs in a row, over and over again. Beverly felt as if she knew every word of '*Alejandro*'

Asking Kay to return to Brooklyn was easier than Beverly thought, she thought Kay was going to be sad or angry at her, but she wasn't. Though she asked Beverly why she wanted to come back, and Beverly couldn't answer that. It was either lie or avoid the truth, she did the second.

It's not like she wanted to keep secrets from her, Kay was probably her only female best friend, all girls in her school were just plain and boring. But she couldn't tell her, not ever.

"So, how are your parents?" Kay asked, cutting Beverly off her internal thoughts.

"Funny you should ask."

"Funny how?"

"Well, by funny," Beverly explained, "I mean not at all funny."

"Ah."

"Is everything okay?" Beverly said after a moment.

"What? Oh yeah. I'm just." Kay shook her head. "These two weeks went really fast."

"It was actually ten days,"

And for the next five minutes, they drove in silence. They didn't say a single word until Kay pulled into Beverly's driveway.

"Seriously, are you okay?" Beverly asked finally.

"What? Yeah."

"Tell me."

Kay sighed. "Okay, well, now that you're leaving, I'm going to feel alone."

"Oh," Beverly grabs her hand. "We can Skype anytime, or I can come visit you anytime."

Kay shrugged. "I don't know, I don't want you to waste money."

Beverly raised an eyebrow but didn't reply, she wanted to tell her that she didn't need money, just a simple spell and Beverly would be outside Kay's door.

"It's not wasting,"

Kay nodded, slowly, jaw clenched. "This is stupid, I'm being dramatic."

Beverly shook her head. Then she grabbed Kay's hand and squeezed it. "All right. Come on."

"You want me to come in?" Her brow furrowed.

"Yup."

"Um. Yeah." Kay nodded quickly. "Wow, I don't think I've actually been inside your house in years."

"I'm aware," Beverly said, feeling stupidly self-conscious. It wasn't a secret that she was not rich. And Kay wasn't going to judge her for having a small house, or clutter, or crappy secondhand IKEA furniture. But Beverly was just weird about having people over. It's like she can't help but be acutely aware of the stains on the carpet and her mismatched bedding. Or even just the fact that her whole room is the size of Kay's closet.

They walked in through the garage, and Kay followed her down the hall. "I can't even remember what your room looks like," she said.

"It's really small. Just warning you."

Then Beverly opened the door and stepped into her room. Kay lingered in the doorway. "This is amazing," she said softly.

Beverly looked at her to see if she was kidding.

"Did you draw all of these?" Kay walked toward the wall, peering closely at the drawings.

"Some are Eddie's, some are from the internet."

Her walls were covered with art—pencil sketches and carefully inked character portraits and chibis and yaoi. If she fell in love with something on DeviantArt, she printed it. Or sometimes Eddie and Stan printed them and gave them to her. And Beverly guessed lately, more and more of them were hers. Her Steve and Bucky sketches, Haruka and Michiru, her original characters. And the picture Eddie drew of Stan and her at his house.

"This room is so you," Kay said, smiling.

"I guess."

Kay flopped backward onto her bed. That was the thing about Kay. She felt totally at home wherever she went. Beverly stretched out beside her, and they both stared at her ceiling fan.

Then Kay covered her face and sighed.

"Hey," Beverly said.

"Hey."

"I know you're sad."

Kay sniffled and turned her head to look at Beverly. There was a tear streaking down her cheek. She wiped it away with the heel of her hand. "I just don't like good-byes."

"I know."

Kay scooted towards her, so close their heads were touching. Then she sighed quietly into Beverly's ear, ruffling her hair with her

breath. They just lied there like that, watching the fan move in circles.

Richie raised the witchlight, and its glow bounced off the downward-leading tunnel. The walls were black and slick, made of a smooth dark stone Eddue didn't recognize. The steps gleamed as if they were damp. A strange smell drifted up through the opening: dank, musty, with a weird metallic tinge that set her nerves on edge.

"What do you think could be down there?"

"I don't know." Richie moved toward the stairs; he put a foot on the top step, testing it, and then shrugged as if he'd made up his mind. He began to make his way down the steps, moving carefully. Partway down he turned and looked up at Eddie. "Are you coming? You can wait up here for me if you want to."

Eddie glanced around the empty library, then shivered and hurried after him.

The stairs spiraled down in tighter and tighter circles, as if they were making their way through the inside of a huge conch shell. The smell grew stronger as they reached the bottom, and the steps widened out into a large square room whose stone walls were streaked with the marks of damp—and other, darker stains. The floor was scrawled with markings: a jumble of pentagrams and runes, with white stones scattered here and there.

Richie took a step forward and something crunched under his feet. He and Eddie looked down at the same time. "Bones," Eddie whispered. Not white stones after all, but bones of all shapes and sizes, scattered across the floor. "What was he *doing* down here?"

The witchlight burned in Richie's hand, casting its eerie glow over the room. "Experiments," Richie said in a dry, tense tone. "The Seelie Queen said—"

"What kind of bones are these?" Eddie's voice rose. "Are they animal bones?"

“No.” Richie kicked a pile of bones with his feet, scattering them.
“Not all of them.”

Eddie’s chest felt tight. “I think we should go back.”

Instead Richie raised the witchlight in his hand. It blazed out, brightly and then more brightly, lighting the air with a harsh white brilliance. The far corners of the room sprang into focus. Three of them were empty. The fourth was blocked with a hanging cloth. There was something behind the cloth, a humped shape—

“Richie,” Eddie whispered. “What is that?”

He didn’t reply. There was a seraph blade in his free hand, suddenly; Eddie didn’t know when he’d drawn it, but it shone in the witchlight like a blade of ice.

“Richie, *don’t*,” said Eddie, but it was too late—he strode forward and twitched the cloth aside with the tip of the blade, then seized it and jerked it down. It fell in a blossoming cloud of dust.

Richie staggered back, the witchlight falling from his grasp. As the blazing light fell, Eddie caught a single glimpse of his face: It was a white mask of horror. Eddie snatched the witchlight up before it could go dark and raised it high, desperate to see what could have shocked Richie—unshockable Richie—so badly.

At first all Eddie saw was the shape of a man—a man wrapped in a dirty white rag, crouched on the floor. Manacles circled his wrists and ankles, attached to thick metal staples driven into the stone floor. *How can he be alive?* Eddie thought in horror, and bile rose up in his throat. The rune-stone shook in his hand, and light danced in patches over the prisoner: He saw emaciated arms and legs, scarred all over with the marks of countless tortures. The skull of a face turned toward him, black empty sockets where the eyes should have been—and then there was a dry rustle, and Eddie saw that what he had thought was a white rag were *wings*, white wings rising up behind his back in two pure white crescents, the only pure things in this filthy room. Eddie gave a dry gasp.

“Richie. Do you see—”

"I see." Richie, standing beside him, spoke in a voice that cracked like broken glass.

"You said there weren't any angels—that no one had ever seen one —"

Richie was whispering something under his breath, a string of what sounded like panicked curses. He stumbled forward, toward the huddled creature on the floor—and recoiled, as if he had bounced off an invisible wall. Looking down, Eddie saw that the angel crouched inside a pentagram made of connected runes graven deeply into the floor; they glowed with a faint phosphorescent light. "The runes," Eddie whispered. "We can't get past—"

"But there must be something—" Richie said, his voice nearly breaking, "something we can do."

The angel raised its head. Eddie saw with a distracted, terrible pity that it had curling golden hair like that shone dully in the light. Tendrils clung close to the hollows of its skull. Its eyes were pits, its face slashed with scars, like a beautiful painting destroyed by vandals. As Eddie stared, its mouth opened and a sound poured from its throat—not words but a piercing golden music, a single singing note, held and held and held so high and sweet that the sound was like pain—

A flood of images rose up before Eddie's eyes. He was still clutching the rune-stone, but its light was gone; he was gone, no longer there but somewhere else, where the pictures of the past flowed before him in a waking dream—fragments, colors, sounds.

He was in a wine cellar, bare and clean single huge rune scrawled on the stone floor. A man stood beside it; he held an open book in one hand and a blazing white torch in the other. When he raised his head, Eddie saw that it was Pennywise: much younger, his face unlined and handsome, his dark eyes clear and bright. As he chanted, the rune blazed up into fire, and when the flames receded, a crumpled figure lay among the ashes: an angel, wings spread and bloody, like a bird shot out of the sky....

The scene changed. Pennywise stood by a window, at his side a

young woman with shining brown hair. A familiar silver ring gleamed on his hand as he reached to put his arms around her. With a jolt of pain Eddie recognized his mother—but she was young, her features soft and vulnerable. She was wearing a white nightgown and was obviously pregnant.

“The Accords,” Pennywise was saying angrily, “were not just the worst idea the Clave has ever had, but the worst thing that could happen to Nephilim. That we should be bound to Downworlders, tied to those creatures—”

“Robert,” Sonia said with a smile, “enough about politics, *please*.” She reached up and twined her arms around Pennywise’s neck, her expression full of love—and his was as well, but there was something else in it, something that sent a shiver down Eddie’s spine....

Pennywise knelt in the center of a circle of trees. There was a bright moon overhead, illuminating the black pentagram that had been scrawled into the scraped earth of the clearing. The branches of trees made a thick net overhead; where they extended above the edge of the pentagram, their leaves curled and turned black. In the center of the five-pointed star sat a woman with long, shining hair; her shape was slim and lovely, her face hidden in shadow, her arms bare and white. Her left hand was extended in front of her, and as she opened her fingers, Eddie could see that there was a long slash across his palm, dripping a slow stream of blood into a silver cup that rested on the pentagram’s edge. The blood looked black in the moonlight, or perhaps it was black.

“The child born with this blood in him,” she said, and her voice was soft and lovely, “will exceed in power the Greater Demons of the abysses between the worlds. He will be more mighty than the Asmodei, stronger than the shedim of the storms. If he is properly trained, there is nothing he will not be able to do. Though I warn you,” she added, “it will burn out his humanity, as poison burns the life from the blood.”

“My thanks to you, Lady of Edom,” said Pennywise, and as he reached to take the cup of blood, the woman lifted her face, and Eddie saw that though she was otherwise beautiful, her eyes were hollow black holes from which curled waving black tentacles, like

feelers probing the air. Eddie stifled a scream—

The night, the forest, vanished. Sonia stood facing someone Eddie couldn't see. She was no longer pregnant, and her bright hair straggled around her stricken, despairing face. "I can't stay with him, Kali," she said. "Not for another day. I read his book. Do you know what he did to Jonathan? I didn't think even Robert could do that." Her shoulders shook. "He used demon blood—Jonathan's not a baby anymore. He isn't even human; he's a monster—" She vanished.

Pennywise was pacing restlessly around the circle of runes, a seraph blade shining in his hand. "Why won't you *speak*?" he muttered. "Why won't you give me what I *want*?" He drove down with the knife, and the angel writhed as golden liquid poured from its wound like spilled sunlight. "If you won't give me answers," Pennywise hissed, "you can give me your blood. It will do me and mine more good than it will you."

Now they were in the Hanscom library. Sunlight shone through the diamond-paned windows, flooding the room with blue and green. Voices came from another room: the sounds of laughter and chatting, a party going on. Sonia knelt by the bookshelf, glancing from side to side. She drew a thick book from her pocket and slipped it onto the shelf....

And she was gone. The scene showed a cellar, the same cellar that Eddie knew he was standing in right now. The same scrawled pentagram scarred the floor, and within the center of the star lay the angel. Pennywise stood by, once again with a burning seraph blade in his hand. He looked years older now, no longer a young man. "Ithuriel," he said. "We are old friends now, aren't we? I could have left you buried alive under those ruins, but no, I brought you here with me. All these years I've kept you close, hoping one day you would tell me what I wanted—needed—to know." He came closer, holding the blade out, its blaze lighting the runic barrier to a shimmer. "When I summoned you, I dreamed that you would tell me *why*. Why Raziel created us, his race of Shadowhunters, yet did not give us the powers Downworlders have—the speed of the wolves, the immortality of the Fair Folk, the magic of warlocks, even the endurance of vampires. He left us naked before the hosts of hell but for these painted lines on our skin. Why should their powers be

greater than ours? Why can't we share in what they have? How is that *just*?"

Within its imprisoning star the angel sat silent as a marble statue, unmoving, its wings folded. Its eyes expressed nothing beyond a terrible silent sorrow.

Pennywise's mouth twisted. "Very well. Keep your silence. I will have my chance." Pennywise lifted the blade. "I have the Mortal Cup, Ithuriel, and soon I shall have the Sword—but without the Mirror I cannot begin the summoning. The Mirror is all I need. Tell me where it is. Tell me where it is, Ithuriel, and I will let you die."

The scene broke apart in fragments, and as his vision faded, Eddie caught glimpses of images now familiar to him from his own nightmares—angels with wings both white and black; sheets of mirrored water, gold and blood; and Richie, turning away from him, always turning away. Eddie reached out for him, and for the first time the angel's voice spoke in his head in words that he could understand.

These are not the first dreams I have ever showed you.

The image of a rune burst behind his eyes, like fireworks—not a rune he had ever seen before; it was as strong, simple, and straightforward as a tied knot. It was gone in a breath as well, and as it vanished, the angel's singing ceased. Eddie was back in his own body, reeling on his feet in the filthy and reeking room. The angel was silent, frozen, wings folded, a grieving effigy.

Eddie let out his breath in a sob. "*Ithuriel*." He reached his hands out to the angel, knowing he couldn't pass the runes, his heart aching. For years the angel had been down here, sitting silent and alone in the blackness, chained and starving but unable to die...

Richie was beside him. Eddie could see from his stricken face that he'd seen everything he had. Richie looked down at the seraph blade in his hand and then back at the angel. Its blind face was turned toward them in silent supplication.

Richie took a step forward, and then another. His eyes were fixed on

the angel, and it was as if, Eddie thought, there were some silent communication passing between them, some speech he couldn't hear. Richie's eyes were bright as gold disks, full of reflected light.

"Ithuriel," he whispered.

The blade in his hand blazed up like a torch. Its glow was blinding. The angel raised its face, as if the light were visible to its blind eyes. It reached out its hands, the chains that bound its wrists rattling like harsh music. Richie turned to her. "Eddie," he said. "The runes."

The runes. For a moment Eddie stared at him, puzzled, but his eyes urged her onward. Eddie handed Richie the witchlight, took his stele from his pocket, and knelt down by the scrawled runes. They looked as if they'd been gouged into the stone with something sharp.

Eddie glanced up at Richie. His expression startled Eddie, the blaze in his eyes—they were full of faith in him, of confidence in his abilities. With the tip of the stele Eddie traced several lines into the floor, changing the runes of binding to runes of release, imprisonment to openness. They flared up as he traced them, as if he were dragging a match tip across sulphur. Done, he rose to his feet. The runes shimmered before him. Abruptly Richie moved to stand beside him. The witchlight stone was gone, the only illumination coming from the seraph blade that he'd named for the angel, blazing in his hand. He stretched it out, and this time his hand passed through the barrier of the runes as if there were nothing there.

The angel reached its hands up and took the blade from him. It shut its blind eyes, and Eddie thought for a moment that it smiled. It turned the blade in its grasp until the sharp tip rested just below its breastbone. Eddie gave a little gasp and moved forward, but Richie grabbed his arm, his grip like iron, and yanked him backward—just as the angel drove the blade home.

The angel's head fell back, its hands dropping from the hilt, which protruded from just where its heart would be—if angels had hearts; Eddie didn't know. Flames burst from the wound, spreading outward from the blade. The angel's body shimmered into white flame, the chains on its wrists burning scarlet, like iron left too long in a fire. Eddie thought of medieval paintings of saints consumed in the blaze

of holy ecstasy—and the angel's wings flew wide and white before they, too, caught and blazed up, a lattice of shimmering fire.

Eddie could no longer watch. He turned and buried his face in Richie's shoulder. Richie's arm came around him, his grip tight and hard. "It's all right," he said into Eddie's ear, "it's all right," but the air was full of smoke and the ground felt like it was rocking under his feet. It was only when Richie stumbled that Eddie realized it wasn't shock: The ground was moving. He let go of Richie and staggered; the stones underfoot were grinding together, and a thin rain of dirt was sifting down from the ceiling. The angel was a pillar of smoke; the runes around it glowed painfully bright. Eddie stared at them, decoding their meaning, and then looked wildly at Richie. "The manor—it was tied to Ithuriel. If the angel dies, the manor—"

Eddie didn't finish his sentence. Richie had already seized his hand and was running for the stairs, pulling him along after him. The stairs themselves were surging and buckling; Eddie fell, banging his knee painfully on a step, but Richie's grip on his arm didn't loosen. Eddie raced on, ignoring the pain in his leg, his lungs full of choking dust. They reached the top of the steps and exploded out into the library. Behind them Eddie could hear the soft roar as the rest of the stairs collapsed. It wasn't much better here; the room was shuddering, books tumbling from their shelves. A statue lay where it had tipped over, in a pile of jagged shards.

Richie let go of Eddie's hand, seized up a chair, and, before Eddie could ask him what he meant to do, threw it at the stained-glass window.

It sailed through in a waterfall of broken glass. Richie turned and held his hand out to Eddie. Behind him, through the jagged frame that remained, Eddie could see a moonlight-saturated stretch of grass and a line of treetops in the distance. They seemed a long way down. *I can't jump that far*, he thought, and was about to shake his head at Richie when he saw Richie's eyes widen, his mouth shaping a warning. One of the heavy marble busts that lined the higher shelves had slid free and was falling towards Eddie; Eddie ducked out of its way, and it hit the floor inches from where he'd been standing, leaving a sizeable dent in the floor.

A second later Richie's arms were around him and he was lifting him off her feet. Eddie was too surprised to struggle as Richie carried him over to the broken window and dumped him unceremoniously out of it. Eddie hit a grassy rise just below the window and tumbled down its steep incline, gaining speed until he fetched up against a hillock with enough force to knock the breath out of him. Eddie sat up, shaking grass out of his hair. A second later Richie came to a stop next to him; unlike Eddie, he rolled immediately into a crouch, staring up the hill at the manor house.

Eddie turned to look where he was looking, but he'd already grabbed Eddie, shoving him down into the depression between the two hills. Later he'd find dark bruises on his upper arms where he'd held him, now he just gasped in surprise as Richie knocked him down and rolled on top of him, shielding Eddie with his body as a huge roar went up. It sounded like the earth shattering apart, like a volcano erupting. A blast of white dust shot into the sky.

Eddie heard a sharp pattering noise all around him. For a bewildered moment he thought it had started to rain—then he realized it was rubble and dirt and broken glass: the detritus of the shattered manor being flung down around them like deadly hail.

Richie pressed him harder into the ground, his body flat against Eddie's, Richie's heartbeat nearly as loud in his ears as the sound of the manor's subsiding ruins.

14. This Guilty Blood

As Beverly entered the Hunter's Moon, she felt disoriented. She felt like she was the new kid at a school, the newbie at work.

Everything was the same but it was so different at the same time, the moon portraits were still there, the same people were there. Except Mike.

Beverly didn't want to admit it, but she'd be lying if she said she was there only to look for Stan, she also found the opportunity to say hi to a friend. So imagine her disappointment when she found out he wasn't even there.

"Looking for someone?" Someone said, Beverly stared at the dark-skinned boy behind the counter, she almost mistook him as Mike, but the scar across his face was undeniable. "I suppose you're not here to see *me*."

"Um," Beverly felt cold, even with her yellow coat around her body. "I actually..."

"Mike," The boy interrupted her. "He's buying stuff, he'll be back soon."

"Okay." Beverly nodded uncomfortably.

"You can wait here, if you want."

"Sure." Beverly didn't have anywhere else to go anyways, Stan wasn't even answering his phone. She approached the counter and sat on the comfortable red velvet seats.

"I'm Lucas," the boy stretched his hand out.

"Beverly," she said, shaking his hand.

"Mike's told me about you."

Okay, that *did* surprise her. "He did?"

Lucas nodded. "Yup. All day long." He laughed.

Beverly laughed too, but it wasn't of amusement. "Since when did you know him?"

Lucas made a thinking face. "Hmm. I guess since he got here, we were fourteen, and I didn't know anyone and he didn't know anyone, so we just got to know each other."

Beverly nodded. "Yeah, I understand." The same thing happened to her and Eddie and Stan. "Are you too a werewolf?"

Lucas looked taken aback, but he nodded. "I wouldn't be here if I wasn't."

"Well, I'm not a werewolf, and I'm here."

"Because you're looking for Mike, Downworlders don't come here unless they want to tease us."

"Whoa, whoa. I think you're generalising here."

Lucas chuckled. "Right, sorry." He looked behind Beverly. "Speaking of the Devil." He pointed.

Beverly turned around and there he was, Mike was using a white T-shirt and loose jeans, he was carrying a box that looked heavy. "*Beverly.*"

She smirked. "Hey, Wolfie."

Mike turned to Lucas. "Can you—"

Lucas waved his hand. "Don't worry about it, I got you covered."

"Seriously?"

Lucas approached them and took the box from Mike's hands, then sighed. "Get out before I tell Freaky Pete to hit your ass with his pan."

Mike exhaled and nodded. "Thanks, bro."

Lucas wrinkled his nose. "Please, don't call me 'bro' ever again."

Beverly turned to Lucas. "It was nice meeting you,"

He nodded. "You too."

"So what's so freaky about Freaky Pete?" Beverly said as she gave her ice cream another lick, her stomach demanded strawberry ice cream so that's exactly what she was gonna give it.

Mike, who already had finished his ice cream, shrugged. "No one really tells me, he freaks out everyone, you could just stare at him and see your whole life through your own eyes.

"Whoa, that's intense." Beverly said. "It doesn't surprise me, though. At this point nothing ever does."

"Why is that?" Mike frowned. "Is it the whole being a witch thing?"

She stared at her almost finished ice cream, she wasn't hungry anymore, and her lips were cold. "Kind of."

"Hm. You have a mysterious thing going on, I like it."

"Mysterious?"

"You know, twinged in sadness and all."

Beverly stopped her feet, she realized they were outside Eleven's loft. "Sad? What makes you think I'm sad?"

"Well, call it a werewolf instinct or whatever but I can almost feel it, the sadness."

Beverly felt her cheeks reddening out. She wondered how sadness must feel like, was it a bad smell? "Really?"

"No," Mike laughed. "But I was right, you *are* sad."

Beverly scoffed and punched his arm, not too hard to leave him in pain, because she knew that if she wanted to, she could. "Maybe I

am.”

“Do you want to talk about it? I'm all ears.”

Beverly wheezed. "Shouldn't it be, you're all...*smell*?"

Mike just stared at her then he chuckled. "Oh, now I get it."

Beverly sighed. "Too slow." She shook her head. "The reason why I left is because I felt alone."

"Alone? You're like, the *opposite* of loneliness."

"Am I, though? I mean, I couldn't save Eddie or you at the ship, I couldn't save Stan at Eleven's party..."

"Wait," Mike slowed down. "It was you?"

"It was me what?"

"I...I saw you, didn't I? I remember...Eddie! It was Eddie who approached me and asked for Stan, the boy who *smelled like detergent*."

Beverly giggled. "Yup. That's Stan." *Was*.

"So, what happened after?"

"He was kidnapped by vampires, and Eddie and Richie went to the Hotel Dumort , then he got Adrian's blood, then—"

"Whoa. Slow down."

"Sorry." Beverly stared at the cars that were parked at her left, white, red, blue. "I found out I was a witch in that party."

Mike raised an eyebrow. "Really? How did you felt?"

Beverly rolled her jaw. "Confused, sad, angry."

"Angry? I mean, having magic powers isn't that bad to me."

"It's not that, it's just..." Beverly waved her hand. "Feeling like I'm

different, like I'm never going to die, watching everything unfold behind my eyes and everyone leaving me." She shrugged. "It's awful."

"Hey," Mike put a hand on her shoulder. "You don't... have to think about that right now."

"But it's inevitable, you know that." She found an empty trash can and threw the rest of the ice cream. "One day it will all just end. How I have to say good-bye."

"Just because it's inevitable doesn't mean you're going to wrap your head about it. I mean, we all live our lives not because we know it's going to end, but because we know how precious time is."

"That doesn't really apply to me, or Stan."

"Of *course* it does," Mike gave her a reassuring smile.

Beverly chose to ignore this. "I want to grow old, to have kids. I want to die a brittle lady with spots on my hands and clouds in my eyes." She gulped, trying so hard not to cry, she hated crying in public. "But I'll never have that."

"You get to have so much *more* than that," Mike said.

Beverly looked at him, the moonlight was making his brown eyes stand out, and for the first time in days, Beverly didn't feel so alone.

That didn't last long, though, Beverly felt eyes behind her back. She turned around and saw a person, it was almost dawn so it was hard to tell, but she recognized the short black hair, the long green pants, blue smoke out of their fingers.

Eleven.

The roar of the collapse faded slowly, like smoke dissipating into the air. It was replaced by the loud chirruping of startled birds; Eddie could see them over Richie's shoulder, circling curiously against the dark sky.

"Richie," he said softly. "I think I dropped your stele somewhere."

Richie drew back slightly, propping himself on his elbows, and looked down at Eddie. Even in the darkness he could see himself reflected in his eyes; his face was streaked with soot and dirt, the collar of his shirt torn. "That's all right. As long as you're not hurt."

"I'm fine." Without thinking, Eddie reached up, his fingers brushing lightly through Richie's hair. Eddie felt him tense, his eyes darkening.

"There was grass in your hair," Eddie said. His mouth was dry; adrenaline sang through his veins. Everything that had just happened—the angel, the shattering manor—seemed less real than what he saw in Richie's eyes.

"You saw what I saw, didn't you? The past, the angel."

"Yes. Something's wrong," Eddie said. "I mean, it can't—Ben can't be —"

"Part *demon*." His eyes bored into Eddie like drills. "You saw what Pennywise was trying to do. He used demon blood—used it on Ben before he was even born."

Eddie pushed away the memory of Pennywise's voice saying, *She told me that I had turned her first child into a monster*. "But warlocks are part demon. Like Beverly. It doesn't make them evil—"

"Not part Greater Demon. You heard what the demon woman said."

It will burn out his humanity, as poison burns the life from the blood. Eddid's voice trembled. "It's not true. It can't be. It doesn't make sense—"

"Maybe. Maybe not." There was a furious desperation in Richie's expression. Eddie could see the gleam of the silver chain around his bare throat, lit to a white flare by the starlight.

"I know Ben, he isn't like that at all."

"Obviously he isn't," Richie sounded exasperated. "My father knew."

"What?"

"Wentworth. He knew, he probably found the angel in the basement, that's why Pennywise got him killed."

"*Richie*," Eddie reached out to him, but Richie flinched.

"I can't—" Eddie saw it now, tears. Tears running down Richie's cheeks, he had never seen Richie cry before. "They're all gone, Eddie."

"Richie,"

"The Toziers, the Wheelers, even *you*."

Eddie frowned. "What?"

"I'm supposed to protect you," he laughed soundlessly and without any humor—"to protect you from the sort of boys who want to do with you exactly what *I* want to do."

Eddie's breath caught. "You said you just wanted to be my friend from now on."

"I lied, Eddie," he said. "You know, there are some kinds of wounds you can get when you're a Shadowhunter—internal injuries from demon poison. You don't even know what's wrong with you, but you're bleeding to death slowly inside. That's what it's like, just being your friend."

"But Max—"

"I had to *try*. And I did." His voice was lifeless. "But God knows, I don't want anyone but you. I don't even *want* to want anyone but you." He reached out, trailed his fingers lightly through Eddie's hair, fingertips brushing Eddie's cheek.

Eddie's voice had sunk to a whisper. "I don't want anyone but you, either."

Eddie was rewarded by the catch in his breathing. Slowly Richie drew himself up onto his elbows. Now he was looking down at Eddie, and his expression had changed—there was a look on his face he'd never

seen before, a sleepy, almost deadly light in his eyes. He let his fingers trail down Eddie's cheek to his lips, outlining the shape of Eddie's mouth with the tip of a finger. "If you want me to stop," he said. "Just say it."

Eddie said nothing. He didn't want to tell him to stop. He was tired of saying *no* to Richie—of never letting himself feel what his whole heart *wanted* him to feel. Whatever the cost.

Richie bent down, his lips against Eddie's cheek, brushing it lightly—and still that light touch sent shivers through his nerves, shivers that made his whole body tremble. "If you want me to stop, tell me now," he whispered. When Eddie still said nothing, he brushed his mouth against the hollow of Eddie's temple. "Or now." He traced the line of his cheekbone. "Or now." His lips were against Eddie's. "Or—"

But Eddie had reached up and pulled him down to him, and the rest of his words were lost against Eddie's mouth. Richie kissed him gently, carefully, but it wasn't gentleness Eddie wanted, not now, not after all this time, and he knotted his fists in Richie's shirt, pulling him harder against him. He groaned softly, low in his throat, and then his arms circled Eddie, gathering him, and they rolled over on the grass, tangled together, still kissing. There were rocks digging into Eddie's back, and his shoulder ached where he'd fallen from the window, but he didn't care. All that existed was Richie; all he felt, hoped, breathed, wanted, and saw was Richie. Nothing else mattered.

Despite his coat, Eddie could feel the heat of him burning through his clothes and his. He tugged Richie's jacket off, and then somehow his shirt was off too. His fingers explored Richie's body as Richie's mouth explored his: soft skin over lean muscle, scars like thin wires. Eddie touched a scar on his shoulder—it was smooth and flat, as if it were a part of his skin, not raised like his other scars. Eddie supposed they were imperfections, these marks, but they didn't feel that way to him; they were a history, cut into his body: the map of a life of endless war.

He fumbled with the buttons of Eddie's coat, his hands shaking. Eddie didn't think he'd ever seen Richie's hands unsteady before. "I'll do it," Eddie said, and reached for the last button himself; as he raised himself up, something cold and metallic struck his collarbone, and he

gasped in surprise.

“What is it?” Richie froze. “Did I hurt you?”

“No. It was this.” Eddie touched the silver chain around his neck. On its end hung a small silver circle of metal. It had bumped against him when Eddie leaned forward. He stared at it now.

It was a ring, the weather-beaten metal with its pattern of stars, with a 'T' on it. Eddie guessed it was for *Tozier*.

“I’m sorry,” Richie said. He traced the line of Eddie’s cheek with his fingertip, a dreamlike intensity in his gaze. “I forgot I was wearing the damn thing.”

Sudden cold flooded Eddie’s veins. “Richie,” he said, in a low voice. “Richie, don’t.”

“Don’t what? Don’t wear the ring?”

“No, don’t—don’t touch me. Stop for a second.”

His face went still. Questions had chased away the dreamlike confusion in his eyes, but he said nothing, just withdrew his hand.

“Richie,” Eddie said again. “Why? Why now?”

His lips parted in surprise. Eddie could see a dark line where he had bitten his bottom lip, or maybe *he* had bitten it. “Why *what* now?”

“You said there was nothing between us. That if we—if we let ourselves feel what we might want to feel, we’d be hurting everyone we care about.”

“I told you. I was lying.” His eyes softened. “You think I don’t want to —?”

“No,” Eddie said. “No, I’m not stupid; I know that you do. But when you said that now you finally understand why you feel this way about me, what did you mean?”

Not that he didn’t know, he thought, but he had to ask, had to hear

him say it.

Richie caught his wrists and drew Eddie's hands up to his face, lacing his fingers through his. "You remember what I said to you at the Mayfields' house?" he asked. "That you never think about what you do before you do it, and that's why you wreck everything you touch?"

"No, I'd forgotten that. Thanks for the reminder."

He barely seemed to notice the sarcasm in Eddie's voice. "I wasn't talking about you, Eds. I was talking about me. That's what *I'm* like." He turned his face slightly and Eddie's fingers slid along his cheek. "And you were right, I'm a terrible person. And I thought maybe that if I was a monster, you would be my angel. And Lucifer loved God, didn't he? So says Milton, anyway."

Eddie sucked in his breath. "I am *not* an angel. I don't return library books. I steal illegal music off the Internet. I lie to my mom. I am completely *ordinary*."

"Not to me." He looked down at Eddie. His face hovered against a background of stars. There was nothing of his usual arrogance in his expression—Eddie had never seen him look so unguarded, but even that unguardedness was mixed with a self-hatred that ran as deep as a wound. "Eddie, I—"

"Get off me," Eddie said.

"What?" The desire in his eyes cracked into a thousand pieces like the shards of the Portal mirror at Renwick's, and for a moment his expression was blankly astonished. Eddie could hardly bear to look at him and still say no. Looking at Richie now—even if he hadn't been in love with him, that part of Eddie that was his mother's son, that loved every beautiful thing for its beauty alone, would still have wanted him.

"You heard me," Eddie said. "And leave my hands alone." He snatched them back, knotting them into tight fists to stop their shaking.

Richie didn't move. His lip curled back, and for a moment Eddie saw

that predatory light in his eyes again, but now it was mixed with anger. "I don't suppose you want to tell me *why*?"

"You just want something else you can hate yourself for. I won't let you use me to prove to yourself how worthless you are."

"I never said that. I never said I was using you."

"Fine," he said. "Tell me now that you're not terrible. Tell me there's nothing wrong with you."

Their gazes locked, his blindly furious; for a moment neither breathed, and then he flung himself off Eddie, swearing, and rolled to his feet. Snatching his shirt up from the grass, he drew it over his head, still glaring. He yanked the shirt down over his jeans and turned away to look for his jacket.

Eddie stood up, staggering a little. The stinging wind raised goose bumps on his arms. His legs felt like they were made of half-melted wax. He did up the buttons on his coat with numb fingers, fighting the urge to burst into tears. Crying wouldn't help anything now.

The air was still full of dancing dust and ash, the grass all around scattered with debris: shattered bits of furniture; the pages of books blowing mournfully in the wind; splinters of gilded wood; a chunk of almost half a staircase, mysteriously unharmed. Eddie turned to look at Richie; he was kicking bits of debris with a savage satisfaction. "Well," Richie said, "we're screwed."

It wasn't what he'd expected. Eddie blinked. "What?"

"Remember? You lost my stele. There's no chance of you drawing a Portal now." He spoke the words with a bitter pleasure, as if the situation satisfied him in some obscure way. "We've got no other way of getting back. We're going to have to walk."

It wouldn't have been a pleasant walk under normal circumstances. Accustomed to city lights, Eddie couldn't believe how dark it was in Derry at night. The thick black shadows that lined the road on either side seemed to be crawling with barely visible *things*, and even with

Richie's witchlight Eddie could see only a few feet ahead of them. He missed streetlights, the ambient glow of headlights, the sounds of the city. All he could hear now was the steady crunch of their boots on gravel and, every once in a while, his own breath puffing out in surprise as he tripped over a stray rock.

After a few hours his feet began to ache and his mouth was dry as parchment. The air had grown very cold, and he hunched along shivering, his hands thrust deep into his pockets. But even all that would have been bearable if only Richie had been talking to him. He hadn't spoken a word since they'd left the manor except to snap out directions, telling Eddie which way to turn at a fork in the road, or ordering him to skirt a pothole. Even then Eddie doubted if he would have minded much if he'd fallen into the pothole, except that it would have slowed them down.

Eventually the sky in the east began to lighten. Eddie, stumbling along half-asleep, raised his head in surprise. "It's early for dawn."

Richie looked at him with bland contempt. "That's Alicante. The sun doesn't come up for another three hours at least. Those are the city lights."

Too relieved that they were nearly home to mind his attitude, Eddie picked up his pace. They rounded a corner and found themselves walking along a wide dirt path cut into a hillside. It snaked along the curve of the slope, disappearing around a bend in the distance. Though the city was not yet visible, the air had grown brighter, the sky shot through with a peculiar reddish glow.

"We must be nearly there," Eddie said. "Is there a shortcut down the hill?"

Richie was frowning. "Something's wrong," he said abruptly. He took off, half-running down the road, his boots sending up puffs of dust that gleamed ochre in the strange light. Eddie ran to keep pace, ignoring the protests of his blistered feet. They rounded the next curve and Richie skidded to a sudden halt, sending Eddie crashing into him. In another circumstance it might have been comic. It wasn't now.

The reddish light was stronger now, throwing a scarlet glow up into the night sky, lighting the hill they stood on as if it were daylight. Plumes of smoke curled up from the valley below like the unfurling feathers of a black peacock. Rising from the black vapor were the demon towers of Alicante, their crystalline shells like arrows of fire piercing the smoky air. Through the thick smoke, Eddie could glimpse the leaping scarlet of flames, scattered across the city like a handful of glittering jewels across a dark cloth.

It seemed incredible, but there it was: They were standing on a hillside high over Alicante, and below them the city was burning.

Notes for the Chapter:

Dun dun DUNNNNNN
Ignore me XD

15. Stars Shine Darkly

"It's late," Ben said, fretfully twitching the lace curtain across the high living room window back into place. "He ought to be back by now."

"Be reasonable, Ben," Bill pointed out, in that superior big-brother tone that seemed to imply that while he, Ben, might be prone to hysteria, he, Bill, was always perfectly calm. Even his posture—he was lounging in one of the overstuffed armchairs next to the Mayfields' fireplace as if he didn't have a care in the world—seemed designed to show off how unworried he was. "Richie d-does this when he's upset, goes off and w-wanders around. He said he was going for a walk. He'll be back."

Ben sighed. He almost wished the Denbroughs were there, but they were still up at the Gard. Whatever the Clave was discussing, the Council meeting was dragging on brutally late. "But he knows New York. He doesn't know Alicante—"

"He probably knows it better than you do." Max was sitting on the couch reading a book, its pages bound in dark red leather. Her red hair was pulled behind her head in a French braid, her eyes fastened on the volume spread across her lap. Ben, who had never been much of a reader, always envied other people their ability to get lost in a book.

Ben raised his hand to his throat with a frown. The pendant slung on the chain around his neck had given a sudden, sharp pulse—but it normally only pulsed in the presence of demons, and they were in Alicante. There was no way there were demons nearby. Maybe the pendant was malfunctioning. "I don't think he's wandering around, anyway. I think it's pretty obvious where he went," Ben responded.

Bill raised his eyes. "You think he w-went to see Eddie?"

"Is he still here? I thought he was supposed to be going back to New York." Max let her book fall closed. "Where is Edward staying, anyway?"

Ben shrugged. “Ask *him*,” he said, cutting his eyes toward Henry. Henry was sprawled on the couch opposite Max’s. He had a book in his hand too, and his dark head was bent over it. He raised his eyes as if he could feel Ben’s gaze on him.

“Were you talking about me?” he asked mildly. Everything about Henry was mild, Ben thought with a twinge of annoyance. He’d been impressed by his looks at first—those sharply planed cheekbones and those black, fathomless eyes—but his affable, sympathetic personality grated on him now.

“What are you reading?” Ben asked, more sharply than he’d meant to. “Is that one of Georgie’s comic books?”

“Yep.” Henry looked down at the copy of *Angel Sanctuary* balanced on the sofa’s arm. “I like the pictures.”

Ben blew out an exasperated breath. Shooting him a look, Bill said, “Henry, earlier today ... Does Richie know where you went?”

“You mean that I was out with Eddie?” Henry looked amused. “Look, it’s not a secret. I would have told Richie if I’d seen him since.”

“I don’t see why he would care.” Max put her book aside, an edge to her voice. “It’s not like Henry did anything wrong. So what if he wants to show Edward some of Derry before he goes home?”

“Richie can be very ... protective,” Bill said after a slight hesitation.

Max frowned. “He should back off. It can’t be good for Edward, being so overprotected. The look on his face when he walked in on us, it was like he’d never seen anyone *kissing* before. I mean, who knows, maybe he hasn’t.”

“He has,” Ben said, thinking of the way Richie had kissed Eddie in the Seelie Court. It wasn’t something he liked to think about—Ben didn’t enjoy wallowing in his own sorrows, much less other people’s. “It’s not that.”

“Then what is it?” Henry straightened up, pushing a lock of dark hair out of his eyes. Ben caught a flash of something—a red line across his palm, like a scar. “Is it just that he hates me personally? Because I

don't know what it is I ever—”

“That’s my book.” A small voice interrupted Henry’s speech. It was Georgie, standing in the living room doorway. He was wearing gray pajamas and his brown hair was disarrayed as if he’d just woken up. He was glaring at the manga novel sitting next to Henry.

“What, this?” Henry held out the copy of *Angel Sanctuary*. “Here you go, kid.”

Georgie stalked across the room and snatched the book back. He scowled at Henry. “Don’t call me kid.”

Henry laughed and stood up. “I’m getting some coffee,” he said, and headed for the kitchen. He paused and turned in the doorway. “Does anyone want anything?”

There was a chorus of refusals. With a shrug Henry disappeared into the kitchen, letting the door swing shut behind him.

“Georgie,” Ben said sharply. “Don’t be rude.”

“I don’t like it when people take my stuff.” Georgie hugged the comic book to his chest.

“Grow up, Georgie. He was just borrowing it.” Ben’s voice came out more irritably than he’d intended; he was still worried about Richie, he knew, and was taking it out on his little brother. “You should be in bed anyway. It’s late.”

“There were noises up on the hill. They woke me up.” Georgie blinked; without his glasses, everything was pretty much a blur to him. “Ben...” The questioning note in his voice got his attention.

Ben turned away from the window. “What?”

“Do people ever climb the demon towers? Like, for any reason?”

Max looked up. “Climb the demon towers?” She laughed. “No, no one ever does that. It’s totally illegal, for one thing; and besides, why would you want to?”

Max, Ben thought, did not have much imagination. He himself could think of lots of reasons why someone might want to climb the demon towers, if only to spit gum down on passersby below.

Georgie was frowning. "But someone did. I know I saw—"

"Whatever you think you saw, you probably dreamed it," Ben told him.

Georgie's face creased. Sensing a potential meltdown, Bill stood up and held out a hand. "C-come on, Georgie," he said, not without affection. "Let's get you back to bed."

"We should *all* get to bed," Max said, standing up. She came over to the window beside Ben and drew the curtains firmly shut. "It's already almost midnight; who knows when they'll get back from the Council? There's no point staying—"

The pendant at Ben's throat pulsed again, sharply—and then the window Max was standing in front of shattered inward. Max screamed as hands reached through the gaping hole—not hands, really, Ben saw with the clarity of shock, but huge, scaled claws, streaked with blood and blackish fluid. They seized Max and yanked her through the smashed window before she could utter a second scream.

Ben's whip was lying on the table by the fireplace. He dashed for it now, ducking around Henry, who had come racing out of the kitchen. "Get weapons," he snapped as Henry stared around the room in astonishment. "Go!" he shrieked, and ran for the window.

By the fireplace Bill was holding Georgie as the younger boy squirmed and yelled, trying to wriggle out of his brother's grip. Bill dragged him toward the door. *Good*, Ben thought. *Get Georgie out of here.*

Cold air blew through the shattered window. Ben kicked out the rest of the broken glass, thankful for the thick soles of his boots. When the glass was gone, he ducked his head and jumped out through the gaping hole in the frame, landing with a jolt on the stone walkway below.

At first glance the walkway looked empty. There were no streetlights along the canal; the main illumination here came from the windows of nearby houses. Ben moved forward cautiously, his electrum whip coiled at his side. He had owned the whip for so long—it had been a twelfth birthday present from Zack—that it felt like part of him now, like a fluid extension of his right arm.

The shadows thickened as she moved away from the house and toward Oldcastle Bridge, which arched over the Princewater canal at an odd angle to the walkway. The shadows at its base were clustered as thickly as black flies—and then, as Ben stared, something moved within the shadows, something white and darting.

Ben ran, crashing through a low border of hedges at the end of someone's garden and hopping down onto the narrow brick causeway that ran below the bridge. His whip had begun to glow with a harsh silvery light, and in its faint illumination he could see Max lying limply at the edge of the canal. A massive scaled demon was sprawled on top of her, pressing her down with the weight of its thick lizardlike body, its face buried in her neck—

But it couldn't be a demon. There had never been demons in Alicante. Never. As Ben stared in shock, the thing raised its head and sniffed the air, as if sensing her there. It was blind, he saw, a thick line of serrated teeth running like a zipper across its forehead where eyes should be. It had another mouth on the lower half of its face as well, fanged with dripping tusks. The sides of its narrow tail glittered as it whipped back and forth, and Ben saw, drawing closer, that the tail was edged with razor-sharp lines of bone.

Max twitched and made a noise, a gasping whimper. Relief spilled over Ben—he'd been half-sure Max was dead—but it was short-lived. As Max moved, Ben saw that her blouse had been sliced open down the front. There were claw marks on her chest, and the thing had another claw hooked into the waistband of her jeans.

A wave of nausea rolled over Ben. The demon wasn't trying to kill Max—not yet. Ben's whip came alive in his hand like the flaming sword of an avenging angel; he launched himself forward, his whip slashing down across the demon's back.

The demon screeched and rolled off Max. It advanced on Ben, its two mouths gaping, talons slashing toward his face. Dancing backward, he threw the whip forward again; it slashed across the demon's face, its chest, its legs. A myriad of crisscrossing lash marks sprang up across the demon's scaled skin, dripping blood and ichor. A long forked tongue shot from its upper mouth, probing for Ben's face. There was a bulb on the end of it, she saw, a sort of stinger, like a scorpion's. He flicked his wrist to the side and the whip curled around the demon's tongue, roping it with bands of flexible electrum. The demon screamed and screamed as he pulled the knot tight and jerked. The demon's tongue fell with a wet, sickening thump to the bricks of the causeway.

Ben jerked the whip back. The demon turned and fled, moving with quick, darting motions like a snake. Ben darted after it. The demon was halfway to the path that led up from the causeway when a dark shape rose up in front of it. Something flashed in the darkness, and the demon fell twitching to the ground.

Ben came to an abrupt stop. Max stood over the fallen demon, a slender dagger in her hand—she must have been wearing it on her belt. The runes on the blade shone like flashing lightning as she drove the dagger down, plunging it over and over into the demon's twitching body until the thing stopped moving entirely and vanished.

Max looked up. Her face was blank. She made no move to hold her blouse closed, despite its torn buttons. Blood oozed from the deep scratch marks on her chest.

Ben let out a low whistle. "Max—are you all right?"

Max let the dagger fall to the ground with a clatter. Without another word she turned and ran, disappearing into the darkness under the bridge.

Caught by surprise, Ben swore and dashed after Max. There were metal stairs on the other side of the causeway, leading back up to Princewater Street. Max was a blur at the top of the stairway. Ben's boots clattering on the steps. When he reached the top, he looked around for Max.

And stared. He was standing at the foot of the broad road on which the Mayfields' house fronted. He could no longer see Max—the girl had disappeared into the churning throng of people crowding the street. And not just people, either. There were things in the street—*demons*—dozens of them, maybe more, like the taloned lizard-creature Max had dispatched under the bridge. Two or three bodies lay in the street already, one only a few feet from Ben—a manhalf his rib cage torn away. Ben could see from his gray hair that he'd been elderly. But of course he was, he thought, his brain ticking over slowly, the speed of his thoughts dulled by panic. All the adults are in the Gard. Down in the city are only children, the old, and the sick....

The red-tinged air was full of the smell of burning, the night split by shrieks and screams. Doors were open all up and down the rows of houses—people were darting out of them, then stopping dead as they saw the street filled with monsters.

It was impossible, unimaginable. Never in history had a single demon crossed the wards of the demon towers. And now there were dozens. Hundreds. Maybe more, flooding the streets like a poisonous tide. Ben felt as if he were trapped behind a glass wall, able to see everything but unable to move—watching, frozen, as a demon seized a fleeing boy and lifted him bodily off the ground, sinking its serrated teeth into his shoulder.

The boy screamed, but his screams were lost in the clamor that was tearing the night apart. The sound rose and rose in volume: the howling of demons, people calling one another's names, the sounds of running feet and shattering glass. Someone down the street was shouting words she could barely understand—something about the demon towers. Isabelle looked up. The tall spires stood sentry over the city as they always had, but instead of reflecting the silver light of the stars, or even the red light of the burning city, they were as dead white as the skin of a corpse. Their luminescence had vanished.

A chill ran through Ben. No wonder the streets were full of monsters—somehow, impossibly, the demon towers had lost their magic. The wards that had protected Alicante for a thousand years were gone.

Stephen had fallen silent hours ago, but Stan was still awake, staring sleeplessly into the darkness, when he heard the screaming.

His head jerked up. Silence. He looked around uneasily—had he dreamed the noise? He strained his ears, but even with his newly sensitive hearing, nothing was audible. He was about to lie back down, when the screams came again, driving into his ears like needles. It sounded as if they were coming from outside the Gard.

Rising, he stood on the bed and looked out the window. He saw the green lawn stretching away, the faraway light of the city a faint glow in the distance. He narrowed his eyes. There was something wrong about the city light, something ... off. It was dimmer than he remembered it—and there were moving points here and there in the darkness, like needles of fire, weaving through the streets. A pale cloud rose above the towers, and the air was full of the stench of smoke.

“Stephen.” Stan could hear the alarm in his own voice. “There’s something wrong.”

He heard doors slamming open and running feet. Hoarse voices shouted. Stan pressed his face close to the bars as pairs of boots hurtled by outside, kicking up stones as they ran, the Shadowhunters calling to one another as they raced away from the Gard, down toward the city.

“The wards are down! The wards are down!”

“We can’t abandon the Gard!”

“The Gard doesn’t matter! Our children are down there!”

Their voices were already growing fainter. Stan jerked back from the window, gasping. “Stephen! The wards—”

“I know. I heard.” Stephen’s voice came strongly through the wall. He didn’t sound frightened but resigned, and even perhaps a little triumphant at being proved right. “Pennywise has attacked while the Clave is in session. Clever.”

“But the Gard—it’s fortified; why don’t they stay up here?”

“You heard them. Because all the children are in the city. Children, aged parents—they can’t just leave them down there.”

The Denbroughs. “But you told them—you told the Clave what would happen. Why didn’t they believe you?”

“Because the wards are their religion. Not to believe in the power of the wards is not to believe that they are special, chosen, and protected by the Angel. They might as well believe they’re just ordinary mundanes.”

Stan swung back to stare out the window again, but the smoke had thickened, filling the air with a grayish pallor. He could no longer hear voices shouting outside; there were cries in the distance, but they were very faint. “I think the city is on fire.”

“No.” Stephen’s voice was very quiet. “I think it’s the Gard that’s burning. Probably demon fire. Pennywise would go after the Gard, if he could.”

“But—” Stan’s words stumbled over one another. “But someone will come and let us out, won’t they? The Consul, or—or Brenner. They can’t just leave us down here to die.”

“You’re a Downworlder,” said Stephen. “And I’m a traitor. Do you really think they’re likely to do anything else?”

“Ben! Ben!”

Bill had his hands on Ben’s shoulders and was shaking him. Ben raised his head slowly; his brother’s white face floated against the darkness behind him. A curved piece of wood stuck up behind his right shoulder: He had his bow strapped across his back, the same bow that Stan had used to kill Greater Demon Abbadon. Ben couldn’t remember Bill walking toward him, couldn’t remember seeing him in the street at all; it was as if he’d materialized in front of Ben all at once, like a ghost.

“Bill.” His voice came out slow and uneven. “Bill, stop it. I’m all right.”

"You d-didn't look all right." Bill glanced up and cursed under his breath. "We have to get off the street. Where's Max?"

Ben blinked. There were no demons in view; someone was sitting on the front steps of the house opposite them and crying in a loud and grating series of shrieks. The old man's body was still in the street, and the smell of demons was everywhere. "Max ... one of the demons tried to—it tried to—" He caught his own breath, held it. He was Ben Hanscom. He did not get hysterical, no matter what the provocation. "We killed it, but then she ran off. I tried to follow her, but she was too fast." He looked up at Bill. "Demons in the city," he said. "How is it possible?"

"I don't know." Bill shook his head. "The wards must be down. There w-were four or five Oni demons out here when I came out of the house. I got one lurking by the b-bushes. The others ran off, but they could come back. Come on. Let's get back to the house."

The person on the stairs was still sobbing. The sound followed them as they hurried back to the Mayfields' house. The street stayed empty of demons, but they could hear explosions, cries, and running feet echoing from the shadows of other darkened streets. As they climbed the Mayfields' front steps, Ben glanced back just in time to see a long snaking tentacle whip out from the darkness between the two houses and snatch the sobbing woman off the front steps. Her sobs turned to shrieks. Ben tried to turn back, but Bill had already grabbed him and shoved him ahead into the house, slamming and locking the front door behind them. The house was dark. "I doused the lights. I d-didn't want to attract any more of them," Bill explained, pushing Ben ahead of him into the living room.

Georgie was sitting on the floor by the stairs, his arms hugging his knees. Henry was by the window, nailing logs of wood he'd taken from the fireplace across the gaping hole in the glass. "There," he said, standing back and letting the hammer drop onto the bookshelf. "That should hold for a while."

Ben dropped down by Georgie and stroked his hair. "Are you all right?"

"No." His eyes were huge and scared. "I tried to see out the window,

but Henry told me to get down.”

“Henry was right,” Bill said. “There were demons out in the street.”

“Are they still there?”

“No, but there are some still in the city. We have to think about what we’re going to do next.”

Henry was frowning. “Where’s Max?”

“She ran off,” Ben explained. “It was my fault. I should have been—”

“It was not your fault. W-without you she’d be dead.” Bill spoke in a clipped voice. “Look, we don’t have time for self-recriminations. I’m going to go after Max I want you three to s-stay here. Ben, look after Georgie. Henry, finish securing the house.”

Ben spoke up indignantly. “I don’t want you going out there alone! Take me with you.”

“I’m the adult here. What I say goes.” Bill’s tone was even. “There’s every chance our parents will be c-coming back any minute from the Gard. The more of us here, the better. It’ll be too easy for us to get separated out there. I’m not risking it, Ben.” His glance moved to Henry. “Do you u-understand?”

Henry had already taken out his stele. “I’ll work on warding the house with Marks.”

“Thanks.” Bill was already halfway to the door; he turned and looked back at Ben. He met his eyes for a split second. Then he was gone.

“Ben.” It was Georgie, his small voice low. “Your wrist is bleeding.”

Ben glanced down. He had no memory of having hurt his wrist, but Georgie was right: Blood had already stained the sleeve of his white jacket. He got to his feet. “I’m going to get my stele. I’ll be right back and help you with the runes, Henry.”

He nodded. “I could use some help. These aren’t my specialty.”

Ben went upstairs without asking him what his specialty might actually be. He felt bone-tired, in dire need of an energy Mark. He could do one himself if necessary, though Bill and Richie had always been better at those sorts of runes than he was.

Once inside his room, Ben rummaged through his things for his stele and a few extra weapons. As he shoved seraph blades into the tops of his boots, his mind was on Bill and the look they'd shared as he'd gone out the door. It wasn't the first time he'd watched his brother leave, knowing he might never see him again. It was something he accepted, had always accepted, as part of his life; it wasn't until he'd gotten to know Eddie, Stan and Beverly that he'd realized that for most people, of course, it was never like that. They didn't live with death as a constant companion, a cold breath down the back of their neck on even the most ordinary days. He'd always had such contempt for mundanes, the way all Shadowhunters did—he'd believed that they were soft, stupid, sheeplike in their complacency. Now he wondered if all that hatred didn't just stem from the fact that he was jealous. It must be nice not worrying that every time one of your family members walked out the door, they'd never come back.

Ben was halfway down the stairs, his stele in hand, when he sensed that something was wrong. The living room was empty. Georgie and Henry were nowhere to be seen. There was a half-finished protection Mark on one of the logs Henry had nailed over the broken window. The hammer he'd used was gone.

His stomach tightened. "Georgie!" he shouted, turning in a circle. "Henry! Where are you?"

Henry's voice answered him from the kitchen. "Ben—in here."

Relief washed over him, leaving him light-headed. "Henry, that's not funny," he said, marching into the kitchen. "I thought you were—" He let the door fall shut behind him. It was dark in the kitchen, darker than it had been in the living room. He strained his eyes to see Henry and Georgie and saw nothing but shadows. "Henry?" Uncertainty crept into his voice. "Henry, what are you doing in here? Where's Georgie?"

"Ben." Ben thought he saw something move, a shadow dark against

lighter shadows. His voice was soft, kind, almost lovely. He hadn't realized before now what a beautiful voice Henry had. "Ben, I'm sorry."

"Henry, you're acting weird. Stop it."

"I'm sorry it's you," he said. "See, out of all of them, I liked you the best."

"Henry—"

"Out of all of them," he said again, in the same low voice, "I thought you were the most like me."

Henry brought his fist down then, with the hammer in it.

Notes for the Chapter:

gasps dramatically :0

16. All The Host of Hell

Bill raced through the dark and burning streets, calling out over and over for Max. As he left the Princewater district and entered the heart of the city, his pulse quickened. The streets were like a Bosch painting come to life: full of grotesque and macabre creatures and scenes of sudden, hideous violence. Panicked strangers shoved Bill aside without looking and ran screaming past without any apparent destination. The air stank of smoke and demons. Some of the houses were in flames; others had their windows knocked out. The cobblestones sparkled with broken glass. As he drew close to one building, he saw that what he'd thought was a discolored patch of paint was a huge swath of fresh blood splattered across the plaster. He spun in place, glancing in every direction, but saw nothing that explained it; nevertheless, he hurried away as quickly as he could.

Bill, alone of all the Denbrough children, remembered Alicante. He'd been a toddler when they'd left, yet he still carried recollections of the shimmering towers, the streets full of snow in winter, chains of witchlight wreathing the shops and houses, water splashing in the mermaid fountain in the Hall. He had always felt an odd tug at his heart at the thought of Alicante, the half-painful hope that his family would return one day to the place where they belonged. To see the city like this was like the death of all joy.

Turning onto a wider boulevard, one of the streets that led down to the Accords Hall, he saw a pack of Belial demons ducking through an archway, hissing and howling. They dragged something behind them—something that twitched and spasmed as it slid over the cobbled street. He darted down the street, but the demons were already gone. Crumpled against the base of a pillar was a limp shape leaking a spidery trail of blood. Broken glass crunched like pebbles under Bill's boots as he knelt to turn the body over. After a single glance at the purple, distorted face, he shuddered and drew away, grateful that it was no one he knew.

A noise made him scramble to his feet. He smelled the stench before he saw it: the shadow of something humped and huge slithering toward him from the far end of the street. A Greater Demon? Bill

didn't wait to find out. He darted across the street toward one of the taller houses, leaping up onto a sill whose window glass had been smashed in. A few minutes later he was pulling himself onto the roof, his hands aching, his knees scraped. He got to his feet, brushing grit from his hands, and looked out over Alicante.

The ruined demon towers cast their dull, dead light down onto the moving streets of the city, where things loped and crawled and slunk in the shadows between buildings, like roaches skittering through a dark apartment. The air carried cries and shouts, the sound of screaming, names called on the wind—and there were the cries of demons as well, howls of mayhem and delight, shrieks that pierced the human ear like pain. Smoke rose above the honey-colored stone houses in a haze, wreathing the spires of the Hall of Accords. Glancing up toward the Gard, Bill saw a flood of Shadowhunters racing down the path from the hill, illuminated by the witchlights they carried. The Clave were coming down to battle.

He moved to the edge of the roof. The buildings here were very close together, their eaves almost touching. It was easy to jump from this roof to the next, and then to the one after that. He found himself running lightly along the rooftops, jumping the slight distances between houses. It was good to have the cold wind in his face, overpowering the stench of demons.

He'd been running for a few minutes before he realized two things: One, he was running toward the white spires of the Accords Hall. And two, there was something up ahead, in a square between two alleys, something that looked like a shower of rising sparks—except that they were purple, a dark purple. Bill had seen blue sparks like that before. He stared for a moment before he began to run.

The roof closest to the square was steeply pitched. Bill skidded down the side of it, his boots knocking against loose shingles. Poised precariously at the edge, he looked down.

Cistern Square was below him, and his view was partly blocked by a massive metal pole that jutted out midway down the face of the building he was standing on. A wooden shop sign dangled from it, swaying in the breeze. The square beneath was full of Iblis demons—human-shaped but formed of a substance like coiling black smoke,

each with a pair of burning yellow eyes. They had formed a line and were moving slowly toward the lone figure of a green in a yellow coat, forcing him to retreat against a wall. Bill could only stare.

Everything about the girl was familiar—the lean curve of her back, the wild tangle of her dark red hair, and the way that purple fire sprang from her fingertips like darting cyanotic fireflies.

Beverly. She was hurling spears of purple fire at the Iblis demons; one spear struck an advancing demon in the chest. With a sound like a pail of water poured onto flames, it shuddered and vanished in a burst of ash. The others moved to fill his place—Iblis demons weren't very bright—and Beverly hurled another spate of fiery spears. Several Iblis fell, but now another demon, more cunning than the others, had drifted around Beverly and was coalescing behind her, ready to strike

Bill didn't stop to think. Instead he jumped, catching the edge of the roof as he fell, and then dropped straight down to seize the metal pole and swing himself up and around it, slowing his fall. He released it and dropped lightly to the ground. The demon, startled, began to turn, its yellow eyes like flaming jewels; Ben had time only to reflect that if he were Richie, he would have had something clever to say before he snatched the seraph blade from his belt and ran it through the demon. With a dusty shriek the demon vanished, the violence of its exit from this dimension splattering Bill with a fine rain of ash.

"Bill?" Beverly was staring at him. She had dispatched the remaining Iblis demons, and the square was empty but for the two of them. "Did you just—did you just save my life?"

Bill knew he ought to say something like, *Of course, because I'm a Shadowhunter and that's what we do*, or *That's my job*. Richie would have said something like that. Richie always knew the right thing to say. But the words that actually came out of Bill's mouth were quite different—and sounded petulant, even to his own ears. "W-what the hell are you doing here?"

"Huh," she said. "And I thought you were the nice one." She rolled her eyes. "Your city is under attack. The wards have broken, and the streets are full of demons. Do you really think this is time for chit

chat?"

Bill set his jaw in a stubborn line. "I'm just a-asking a question."

Beverly threw her hands up in the air in a gesture of utter exasperation. Bill noted with interest that when she did it, a few sparks escaped from her fingertips, like fireflies escaping from a jar. "Eleven brought me here. Okay? She said she needed all the help she could get, and that I was her last choice, obviously."

"*Understandable*." Bill scoffed, sounding more mean than he intended to.

Beverly frowned. "She also told me about Stan, you didn't even cared for him, didn't you? Look I get it, I understand your vendetta against Downworlders, but don't you realize that he has sacrificed everything for us? For you? You do realize he saved your life once?"

"This has nothing to do with Downworlders."

"Then why?"

Bill opened his mouth then closed it again. How could he explain his own feelings when he couldn't even understand them?

At that moment a dozen more Iblis demons flooded into the square. Bill felt his jaw drop. "Damn it."

Beverly followed his gaze. The demons were already fanning out into a half circle around them, their yellow eyes glowing. "Way to change the subject, Denbrough."

"Tell you what." Bill reached for a second seraph blade. "W-we live through this, and I promise I'll tell you the truth."

Beverly raised her hands, her fingers shining with individual azure flames. They lit her grin with a fiery purple glow. "It's a deal."

"Pennywise," Richie breathed, his face was as white as he stared down at the city. Through the layers of smoke, Eddie thought he

could almost glimpse the narrow warren of city streets, choked with running figures, tiny black ants darting desperately to and fro—but he looked again and there was nothing, nothing but the thick clouds of black vapor and the stench of flame and smoke.

“You think Pennywise did this?” The smoke was bitter in Eddie’s throat. “It looks like a fire. Maybe it started on its own—”

“The North Gate is open.” Richie pointed toward something Eddie could barely make out, given the distance and the distorting smoke. “It’s never left open. And the demon towers have lost their light. The wards must be down.” He drew a seraph blade from his belt, clutching it so tightly his knuckles turned the color of ivory.

“I have to get over there.” A knot of dread tightened Eddie’s throat. “Stan—”

“They’ll have evacuated him from the Gard. Don’t worry, Eddie. He’s probably better off than most down there. The demons aren’t likely to bother him. They tend to leave Downworlders alone.”

“I’m sorry,” Eddie whispered. “The Denbroughs—Bill—Ben— ”

“*Jahoel*,” Richie said, and the angel blade flared up, bright as daylight in his bandaged left hand. “Eddie, I want you to stay here. I’ll come back for you.” The anger that had been in his eyes since they’d left the manor had evaporated. He was all soldier now.

Eddie shook his head. “No. I want to go with you.”

“Eddie—” He broke off, stiffening all over. A moment later Eddie heard it too—a heavy, rhythmic pounding, and laid over that, a sound like the crackling of an enormous bonfire. It took Eddie several long moments to deconstruct the sound in his mind, to break it down as one might break down a piece of music into its component notes. “It’s—”

“*Werewolves*.” Richie was staring past him.

Following his gaze, Eddie saw them, streaming over the nearest hill like a spreading shadow, illuminated here and there with fierce bright eyes. A pack of wolves—more than a pack; there must have

been hundreds of them, even a thousand. Their barking and baying had been the sound he'd thought was a fire, and it rose up into the night, brittle and harsh.

Edde's stomach turned over. He knew werewolves. He had fought beside werewolves. But these were not Jim's wolves, not wolves who'd been instructed to look after her and not to harm him. Eddie thought of the terrible killing power of Jim's pack when it was unleashed, and suddenly he was afraid.

Beside him, Richie swore once, fiercely. There was no time to reach for another weapon; he pulled Eddie tightly against him, his free arm wrapped around Eddie, and with his other hand he raised *Jahoel* high over their heads. The light of the blade was blinding. Eddie gritted his teeth—

And the wolves were on them. It was like a wave crashing—a sudden blast of deafening noise, and a rush of air as the first wolves in the pack broke forward and leaped. There were burning eyes and gaping jaws; Richie dug his fingers into Eddie's side—

And the wolves sailed by on either side of them, clearing the space where they stood by a good two feet. Eddie whipped his head around in disbelief as two wolves—one sleek and brindled, the other huge and steely gray—hit the ground softly behind them, paused, and kept running, without even a backward glance. There were wolves all around them, and yet not a single wolf touched them. They raced past, a flood of shadows, their coats reflecting moonlight in flashes of silver so that they almost seemed to be a single, moving river of shapes thundering toward Richie and Eddie—and then parting around them like water around a stone. The two Shadowhunters might as well have been statues for all the attention the lycanthropes paid them as they hurtled by, their jaws gaping, their eyes fixed on the road ahead of them.

And then they were gone. Richie turned to watch the last of the wolves pass by and race to catch up with its companions. There was silence again now, only the very faint sounds of the city in the distance. Richie let go of Eddie, lowering *Jahoel* as he did so. “Are you all right?”

“What happened?” Eddie whispered. “Those werewolves—they just went right by us—”

“They’re going to the city. To Alicante.” He took a second seraph blade from his belt and held it out to Eddie. “You’ll need this.”

“You’re not leaving me here, then?”

“No point. It’s not safe anywhere. But—” He hesitated. “You’ll be careful?”

“I’ll be careful,” Eddie said. “What do we do now?”

Richie looked down at Alicante, burning below them. “Now we run.”

It was never easy to keep up with Richie, and now, when he was running nearly flat out, it was almost impossible. Eddie sensed that he was in fact restraining himself, cutting back his speed to let Eddie catch up, and that it cost him something to do it.

The road flattened out at the base of the hill and curved through a stand of high, thickly branched trees, creating the illusion of a tunnel. When Eddie came out the other side, he found himself standing before the North Gate. Through the arch Eddie could see a confusion of smoke and leaping flames. Richie stood in the gateway, waiting for him. He was holding Jahoel in one hand and another seraph blade in the other, but even their combined light was lost against the greater brightness of the burning city behind him.

“The guards,” Eddie panted, racing up to him. “Why aren’t they here?”

“At least one of them is over in that stand of trees.” Richie jerked his chin in the direction they’d come from. “In pieces. No, don’t look.” He glanced down. “You’re holding your seraph blade wrong. Hold it like this.” He showed Eddie. “And you need to name it. Cassiel would be a good one.”

“*Cassiel*,” Eddie repeated, and the light of the blade flared up.

Richie looked at him soberly. "I wish I'd had time to train you for this. Of course, by all rights, no one with as little training as you should be able to use a seraph blade at all. It surprised me before, but now that we know what Pennywise did—"

Eddie very much did not want to talk about what Pennywise had done. "Or maybe you were just worried that if you did train me properly, I'd turn out to be better than you," he said.

The ghost of a smile touched the corner of his mouth. "Whatever happens, Eddie," he said, looking at her through Jahoel's light, "stay with me. You understand?" He held Eddie's gaze, his eyes demanding a promise from Eddie.

For some reason the memory of kissing him in the grass at the Hanscom manor rose up in Eddie's mind. It seemed like a million years ago. Like something that had happened to someone else. "I'll stay with you."

"Good." He looked away, releasing Eddie. "Let's go."

They moved slowly through the gate, side by side. As they entered the city, Eddie became aware of the noise of battle as if for the first time—a wall of sound made up of human screams and nonhuman howls, the sounds of smashing glass and the crackle of fire. It made the blood sing in his ears.

The courtyard just past the gate was empty. There were huddled shapes scattered here and there on the cobblestones; Eddie tried not to look at them too hard. He wondered how it was that you could tell someone was dead even from a distance, without looking too closely. Dead bodies didn't resemble unconscious ones; it was as if you could sense that something had fled from them, that some essential spark was now missing.

Richie hurried them across the courtyard—Eddie could tell he didn't like the open, unprotected space much—and down one of the streets that led off it. There was more wreckage here. Shop windows had been smashed and their contents looted and strewn around the street. There was a smell in the air too—a rancid, thick, garbage smell. Eddie knew that smell. It meant demons.

"This way," Richie hissed. They ducked down another, narrower street. A fire was burning in an upper floor of one of the houses lining the road, though neither of the buildings on either side of it seemed to have been touched. Eddie was oddly reminded of photos he'd seen of the Blitz in London, where destruction had rained down haphazardly from the sky.

Looking up, he saw that the fortress above the city was wreathed in a funnel of black smoke. "The Gard."

"I told you, they'll have evacuated—" Richie broke off as they came out from the narrow street into a larger thoroughfare. There were bodies in the road here, several of them. Some were small bodies. Children. Richie ran forward, Eddie following more hesitantly. There were three, he saw as they got closer—none of them, he thought with guilty relief, old enough to be Georgie. Beside them was the corpse of an older man, his arms still thrown wide as if he'd been protecting the children with his own body. Richie's expression was hard. "Eddie—turn around. Slowly."

Eddie turned. Just behind him was a broken shop window. There had been cakes in the display at some point—a tower of them covered in bright icing. They were scattered on the ground now among the smashed glass, and there was blood on the cobblestones too, mixing with the icing in long pinkish streaks. But that wasn't what had put the note of warning into Richie's voice. Something was crawling out of the window—something formless and huge and slimy. Something equipped with a double row of teeth running the length of its oblong body, which was smeared with icing and dusted with broken glass like a layer of glittering sugar.

The demon flopped down out of the window onto the cobblestones and began to slither toward them. Something about its oozing, boneless motion made bile rise up in the back of Eddie's throat. He backed up, almost knocking into Richie.

"It's a Behemoth demon," he said, staring at the slithering thing in front of them. "They eat *everything*."

"Do they eat ...?"

“People? Yes,” Richie said. “Get behind me.”

Eddie took a few steps back to stand behind him, her eyes on the Behemoth. There was something about it that repulsed him even more than the demons she’d encountered before. It looked like a blind slug with teeth, and the way it oozed ... But at least it didn’t move fast. Richie shouldn’t have much trouble killing it. As if spurred on by his thought, Richie darted forward, slashing down with his blazing seraph blade. It sank into the Behemoth’s back with a sound like overripe fruit being stepped on. The demon seemed to spasm, then shudder and re-form, suddenly several feet away from where it had been before.

Richie drew Jahoel back. “I was afraid of that,” he muttered. “It’s only semi-corporeal. Hard to kill.”

“Then don’t.” Eddie tugged at his sleeve. “At least it doesn’t move fast. Let’s get out of here.”

Richie let Eddie pull him back reluctantly. They turned to run in the direction they’d come from— And the demon was there again, in front of them, blocking the street. It seemed to have grown bigger, and a low noise was coming from it, a sort of angry insectile chittering.

“I don’t think it wants us to leave,” Richie said.

“Richie—”

But he was already running at the thing, sweeping Jahoel down in a long arc meant to decapitate, but the thing just shuddered again and re-formed, this time behind him. It reared up, showing a ridged underside like a cockroach’s. Richie whirled and brought Jahoel down, slicing into the creature’s midsection. Green fluid, thick as mucus, spurted over the blade.

Richie stepped back, his face twisting in disgust. The Behemoth was still making the same chittering noise. More fluid was spurting from it, but it didn’t seem hurt. It was moving forward purposefully.

“Richie!” Eddie called. “Your blade—”

He looked down. The Behemoth demon's mucus had coated Jahael's blade, dulling its flame. As he stared, the seraph blade spluttered and went out like a fire doused by sand. He dropped the weapon with a curse before any of the demon's slime could touch him.

The Behemoth reared back again, ready to strike. Richie ducked back—and then Eddie was there, darting between him and the demon, his seraph blade swinging. Eddie jabbed the creature just below its row of teeth, the blade sinking into its mass with a wet, ugly sound. He jerked back, gasping, as the demon went into another spasm. It seemed to take the creature a certain amount of energy to re-form each time it was wounded. If they could just wound it enough times

Something moved at the edge of Eddie's vision. A flicker of gray and brown, moving fast. They weren't alone in the street.

Richie turned, his eyes widening. "Eddie!" he shouted. "Behind you!"

Eddie whirled, Cassiel blazing in his grip, just as the wolf launched itself at him, its lips drawn back in a fierce snarl, its jaws gaping wide.

Richie shouted something; Eddie didn't know what, but he saw the wild look in his eyes, even as Eddie threw himself sideways, out of the path of the wolf. It sailed by him, claws outstretched, body arched—and struck its target, the Behemoth, knocking it flat to the ground before tearing at it with bared teeth.

The demon screamed, or as close as it could come to screaming—a high-pitched whining sound, like air being let out of a balloon. The wolf was on top of it, pinning it, its muzzle buried deep in the demon's slimy hide. The Behemoth shuddered and thrashed in a desperate effort to re-form and heal its injuries, but the wolf wasn't giving it a chance. Its claws sunk deeply into demon flesh, the wolf tore chunks of jellylike flesh out of the Behemoth's body with its teeth, ignoring the spurting green fluid that fountained around it. The Behemoth began a last, desperate series of convulsive spasms, its serrated jaws clacking together as it thrashed—and then it was gone, only a viscous puddle of green fluid steaming on the cobblestones where it had been.

The wolf made a noise—a sort of satisfied grunt—and turned to regard Richie and Eddie with eyes turned silver by the moonlight. Richie pulled another blade from his belt and held it high, drawing a fiery line on the air between themselves and the werewolf.

The wolf snarled, the hair rising stiffly along its spine.

Eddie caught at his arm. “No—don’t.”

“It’s a *werewolf*, Eddie—”

“It killed the demon for us! It’s on our side!” Eddie broke away from Richie before he could hold him back, approaching the wolf slowly, his hands out, palms flat. He spoke in a low, calm voice. “I’m sorry. We’re sorry. We know you don’t want to hurt us.” Eddie paused, hands still outstretched, as the wolf regarded him with blank eyes. “Who—who are you?” he asked. He looked back over his shoulder at Richie and frowned. “Can you put that thing away?”

Richie looked as if he was about to tell Eddie in no uncertain terms that you didn’t just *put away* a seraph blade that was blazing in the presence of danger, but before he could say anything, the wolf gave another low growl and began to rise. Its legs elongated, its spine straightening, its jaw retracting. In a few seconds a boy stood in front of them—a boy wearing a stained white shift shirt, and what looked like black boxers, a scar banding his throat.

““Who are you?”” the boy mimicked in disgust. “I can’t believe you didn’t recognize me. It’s not like all wolves look exactly alike. *Humans*.”

Eddie let out a breath of relief. “Mike!”

“It’s me. Saving your butts, as usual.” He grinned. Mike was spattered with blood and ichor—it hadn’t been that visible against his wolf’s coat, but the black and red streaks stood out startlingly against his brown skin. He put a hand against his stomach. “And *gross*, by the way. I can’t believe I munched all that demon. I hope I’m not allergic.”

“But what are you *doing* here?” Eddie demanded. “I mean, not that

we're not glad to see you, but—"

"Don't you know?" Mike looked from Richie to Eddie in puzzlement. "Jim brought us here."

"Jim?" Eddie stared. "Jim is ... here?"

Mike nodded. "He got in touch with his pack, and a bunch of others, everyone he could think of, and told us all we had to come to Derry. Some of the packs, they Portaled into the forest. Jim said the Nephilim were going to need our help...." His voice trailed off. "Did you not know about this?"

"No," said Richie, "and I doubt the Clave did either. They're not big on taking help from Downworlders."

Mike straightened up, his eyes sparking with anger. "If it hadn't been for us, you all would have been *slaughtered*. There was no one protecting the city when we got here—"

"Don't," Eddie said, shooting an angry look at Richie. "I'm really, really grateful to you for saving us, Mike, and Richie is too, even though he's so stubborn that he'd rather jam a seraph blade through his eyeball than say so. And don't say you hope he does," he added hastily, seeing the look on the other boy's face, "because that's really not helpful. Right now we need to get to the Denbroughs' house, and then I have to find Jim—"

"The Denbroughs? I think they're in the Accords Hall. That's where we've been bringing everyone. I saw Bill there, at least," Mike said, "and Beverly."

Eddie opened his mouth in surprise, he hadn't talked to Beverly in days.

"If Bill is there, the others must be too." The look of relief on Richie's face made Eddie want to put his hand on his shoulder. He didn't. "Clever to bring everyone to the Hall; it's warded." He slid the glowing seraph blade into his belt. "Come on—let's go."

Notes for the Chapter:

Kinda a filler chapter to build up the next one :)))

17. The Hall of Accords

Notes for the Chapter:

Updated early than usual bc yes :))))

Eddie recognized the inside of the Hall of Accords the moment he entered it. It was the place he had dreamed about, where he had been dancing with Stan and then Richie.

This was where I was trying to send myself when I went through the Portal, he thought, looking around at the pale white walls and the high ceiling with its enormous glass skylight through which she could see the night sky. The room, though very large, seemed somehow smaller and dingier than it had in his dream. The mermaid fountain was still there in the center of the room, spurting water, but it looked tarnished, and the steps that led up to it were crowded with people, many sporting bandages. The space was full of Shadowhunters, people hurrying here and there, sometimes stopping to peer into the faces of other passersby as if hoping to find a friend or a relative. The floor was filthy with dirt, tracked with smeared mud and blood.

What struck Eddie more than anything else was the silence. If this had been the aftermath of some disaster in the mundane world, there would have been people shouting, screaming, calling out to one another. But the room was almost soundless. People sat quietly, some with their heads in their hands, some staring into space. Children huddled close to their parents, but none of them were crying.

He noticed something else, too, as he made his way into the room, Richie and Mike on either side of him. There was a group of scruffy-looking people standing by the fountain in a ragged circle. They stood somehow apart from the rest of the crowd, and when Mike caught sight of them and smiled, Eddie realized why.

“My pack!” Mike exclaimed. He darted toward them, pausing only to glance back over his shoulder at Eddie as he went. “I’m sure Jim’s around here somewhere,” he called, and vanished into the group, which closed around him. Eddie wondered, for a moment, what would happen if he followed the werewolf boy into the circle. Would

they welcome him as Jim's friend, or just be suspicious of him as another Shadowhunter?

"Don't," Richie said, as if reading his mind. "It's not a good—"

But Eddie never found out what it wasn't, because there was a cry of "*Richie!*" and Bill appeared, breathless from pushing his way through the crowd to get to them. His dark hair was a mess and there was blood on his clothes, but his eyes were bright with a mixture of relief and anger. He grabbed Richie by the front of his jacket. "What *happened* to you?"

Richie looked affronted. "What happened to *me*?"

Bill shook him, not lightly. "You said you w-were going for a *walk*! What kind of walk takes six hours?"

"A long one?" Richie suggested.

"I could kill you," Bill said, releasing his grip on Richie's clothes. "I'm seriously thinking about it."

"That would kind of defeat the point, though, wouldn't it?" said Richie. He glanced around. "Where is everyone? Ben, Georgie, and —"

"Ben and Georgie are b-back at the Mayfields', with Henry," said Bill. "Mom and Dad are on their w-way there to get them. And Max's here, with her parents, but she's not talking much. She had a pretty bad time with a Rahab demon down by one of the canals. But Ben saved her."

"And Stan?" Eddie said anxiously. "Have you seen Stan? He should have come down with the others from the Gard."

Bill shook his head. "No, I haven't—but I haven't seen the Inquisitor, either, or the Consul. He'd p-probably be with one of them. Maybe they stopped somewhere else, or—"

"Eddie!"

Eddie saw a bunch of red hair before he knew Beverly was hugging

him, he could smell her apple shampoo and her vanilla perfume.

"Bev," he said. "I—I'm so glad you're here."

She nodded before pulling herself away from here. "Me too. I thought you were avoiding me."

"Of course not, I just—"

He broke off, as a murmur swept the room; Eddie saw the group of lycanthropes look up, alert as a group of hunting dogs scenting game. He turned—

And saw Jim, tired and bloodstained, coming through the double doors of the Hall.

Eddie ran toward him. Forgetting how upset he'd been when he'd left, and forgetting how angry Jim had been with him for bringing them here, forgetting everything but how glad he was to see him. Jim looked surprised for a moment as Eddie barreled toward him—then he smiled, and put his arms out, and picked Eddie up as he hugged him, the way he'd done when Eddie had been very small. He smelled like blood and flannel and smoke, and for a moment Eddie closed his eyes, thinking of the way Bill had grabbed onto Richie the moment he'd seen him in the Hall, or how Beverly hugged him, because that was what you did with family when you'd been worried about them; you grabbed them and held on to them and told them how much they'd pissed you off, and it was okay, because no matter how angry you got, they still belonged to you. And what he had said to Pennywise was true. Jim was his family.

He set Eddie back down on his feet, wincing a little as he did so. "Careful," he said. "A Croucher demon got me in the shoulder down by Merryweather Bridge. He put his hands on Eddie's shoulders, studying his face. "But you're all right, aren't you?"

"Well, this is a touching scene," said a cold voice. "Isn't it?"

Eddie turned, Jim's hand still on him shoulder. Behind him stood a tall man in a blue cloak that swirled around his feet as he moved toward them. His face under the hood of his cloak was the face of a

carved statue: high-cheekboned with eagle-sharp features and heavy-lidded eyes. “Jimothy,” he said, without looking at Eddie. “I might have expected you’d be the one behind this—this invasion.”

“*Invasion?*” Jim echoed, and suddenly, there was his pack of lycanthropes, standing behind him. They had moved into place so quickly and silently it was as if they’d appeared from out of nowhere. “We’re not the ones who invaded your city, Consul. That was Pennywise. We’re just trying to help.”

“The Clave doesn’t need help,” the Consul snapped. “Not from the likes of you. You’re breaking the Law just by entering the Glass City, wards or no wards. You must know that.”

“I think it’s fairly clear that the Clave does need help. If we hadn’t come when we did, many more of you would now be dead.” Jim glanced around the room; several groups of Shadowhunters had moved toward them, drawn to see what was going on. Some of them met Jim’s gaze head-on; others dropped their eyes, as if ashamed. But none of them, Eddie thought with a sudden surge of surprise, looked angry. “I did it to prove a point, Malachi.”

Malachi’s voice was cold. “And what point might that be?”

“That you need us,” Jim said. “To defeat Pennywise, you need our help. Not just the help of lycanthropes, but of all Downworlders.”

“What can Downworlders do against Pennywise?” Malachi asked scornfully. “Jimothy, you know better than that. You were one of us once. We have always stood alone against all perils and guarded the world from evil. We will meet Pennywise’s power now with a power of our own. The Downworlders would do well to stay out of our way. We are Nephilim; we fight our own battles.”

“That’s not *precisely* true, is it?” said a velvety voice. It was Jane Ives, wearing a long and glittering coat, multiple hoops on her ears, and a roguish expression. Eddie had no idea where she’d come from. “You lot have used the help of warlocks on more than one occasion in the past, and paid handsomely for it too.”

Malachi scowled. “I don’t remember the Clave inviting you into the

Glass City, Jane Ives.”

“They didn’t,” she said. “Your wards are down.”

“Really?” The Consul’s voice dripped sarcasm. “I hadn’t noticed.”

Eleven looked concerned. “That’s terrible. Someone should have told you.” She glanced at Jim. “Tell him the wards are down.”

Jim looked exasperated. “Malachi, for God’s sake, the Downworlders are strong; we have numbers. I told you, we can help.”

The Consul’s voice rose. “And I told *you*, we don’t need or want your help!”

“Eleven,” Eddie slipped silently to her side and whispered. A small crowd had gathered, watching Jim and the Consul fight; he was fairly sure no one was paying attention to him. “Come talk to me. While they’re all too busy squabbling to notice.”

Eleven gave him a quick questioning look, nodded, and drew him away, cutting through the crowd like a can opener. None of the assembled Shadowhunters or werewolves seemed to want to stand in the way of a six-foot-tall warlock with cat eyes and a manic grin. She hustled him into a quieter corner. “What is it?”

“I got the book.” Eddie drew it from the pocket of his bedraggled coat, leaving smeared fingerprints on the ivory cover. “I went to Pennywise’s manor. It was in the library like you said. And—” He broke off, thinking of the imprisoned angel. “Never mind.” He offered her the Book of the White. “Here. Take it.”

Eleven plucked the book from his grasp with a long-fingered hand. She flipped through the pages, her eyes widening. “This is even better than I’d heard it was,” she announced gleefully. “I can’t wait to get started on these spells.”

“Eleven!” Eddie’s sharp voice brought her back down to earth. “My mom first. You promised.”

“And I abide by my promises.” The warlock nodded gravely.

“There’s something else, too,” he added, thinking of Stan. “Before you go—”

“Eddie!” A voice spoke, breathless, at his shoulder. He turned in surprise to see Henry standing beside him. He was wearing gear, and it looked right on him somehow, he thought, as if he were born to wear it. Where everyone else looked bloodstained and disheveled, he was unmarked—except for a double line of scratches that ran the length of his left cheek, as if something had clawed at him. “I was worried about you. I went by Amatis’s house on the way here, but you weren’t there, and she said she hadn’t seen you—”

“Well, I’m fine,” Eddie glanced from Henry to Eleven, who was holding the Book of the White against her chest. Henry’s angular eyebrows were raised. “Are you? Your face—” Eddie reached up to touch his injuries. The scratches were still oozing a trace amount of blood.

Henry shrugged, brushing his hand away gently. “A demon got me near the Mayfields’. I’m fine, though. What’s going on?”

“Nothing. I was just talking to El—Kali,” Eddie said hastily, realizing with a sudden horror that Henry had no idea who Eleven actually was.

“Elkali?” Henry arched his eyebrows. “Okay, then.” He glanced curiously at the Book of the White. Eddie wished Eleven would put it away—the way she was holding it, its gilded lettering was clearly visible. “What’s that?”

Eleven studied him for a moment, her cat eyes considering. “A spell book,” she said finally. “Nothing that would be of interest to a Shadowhunter.”

“Actually, my aunt collects spell books. Can I see?” Henry held his hand out, but before Eleven could refuse, Eddie heard someone call his name, and Richie and Bill descended on them, clearly none too pleased to see Henry.

“I thought I told you to stay with Georgie and Ben!” Bill snapped at him. “Did you leave them alone?”

Slowly Henry's eyes moved from Eleven to Bill. "Your parents came home, just like you said they would." His voice was cold. "They sent me ahead to tell you they are all right, and so are Ben and Georgie. They're on their way."

"Well," said Richie, his voice heavy with sarcasm, "thanks for passing on *that* news the second you got here."

"I didn't see you the second I got here," said Henry. "I saw Eddie."

"Because you were looking for him."

"Because I needed to talk to him. Alone." He caught Eddie's eyes again, and the intensity in them gave him pause. He wanted to tell him not to look at him like that when Richie was there, but that would sound unreasonable and crazy; and besides, maybe Henry actually had something important to tell him. "Eddie?"

Eddie nodded. "All right. Just for a second," he said, and saw Richie's expression change: He didn't scowl, but his face went very still. "I'll be right back," he added, but Richie didn't look at him. He was looking at Henry.

Henry took Eddie by the wrist and drew him away from the others, pulling him toward the thickest part of the crowd. He glanced back over his shoulder. They were all watching him. Even Eleven. Eddie saw her shake her head once, very slightly.

Eddie dug his heels in. "Henry. *Stop*. What is it? What do you have to tell me?"

Henry turned to face him, still holding his wrist. "I thought we could go outside," he said. "Talk in private—"

"No. I want to stay here," Eddie said, and heard his own voice waver slightly, as if he weren't sure. But he *was* sure. He yanked his wrist back, pulling it out of Henry's grasp. "What is going on with you?"

"That book," Henry said. "That Prasad was holding—the Book of the White—do you know where she got it?"

"*That's* what you wanted to talk to me about?"

"It's an extraordinarily powerful spell book," explained Henry. "And one that—well, that a lot of people have been looking for for a long time."

Eddie blew out an exasperated breath. "All right, Henry, look," he said. "That's not Kali Prasad. That's Jane Ives."

"*That's Jane Ives?*" Henry spun around and stared before turning back to Eddie with an accusatory look in his eyes. "And you knew all along, right? You know Ives."

"Yes, and I'm sorry. But she didn't want me to tell you. And she was the only one who could help me save my mother. That's why I gave her the Book of the White. There's a spell in there that might help her."

Something flashed behind Henry's eyes, and Eddie had the same feeling he'd had after they kissed: a sudden wrench of wrongness, as if he'd taken a step forward expecting to find solid ground under his feet and instead plunged into empty space. Henry's hand shot out and grabbed his wrist. "You gave the book—the Book of the White—to a *warlock*? A filthy Downworlder?"

Eddie went very still. "I can't believe you just said that." He looked down at the place where Henry's hand encircled his wrist. "Jane is my friend."

Henry loosened his grip on Eddie's wrist, just a fraction. "I'm sorry," he said. "I shouldn't have said that. It's just—how well do you know Jane Ives?"

"Better than I know you," Eddie said coldly. He glanced back toward the place he'd left Eleven standing with Richie and Bill—and a shock of surprise went through him. Eleven was gone. Richie and Bill stood by themselves, watching him and Henry. Eddie could sense the heat of Richie's disapproval like an open oven.

Henry followed Eddie's gaze, his eyes darkening. "Well enough to know where she went with your book?"

"It's not my book. I gave it to her," Eddie snapped. "And I don't see

what business it is of yours, either. Look, I appreciate that you offered to help me find Kali Prasad yesterday, but you're really freaking me out now. I'm going back to my friends."

Eddie started to turn away, but Henry moved to block him. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said what I did. It's just—there's more to all this than you know."

"So tell me."

"Come outside with me. I'll tell you everything." His tone was anxious, worried. "Eddie, please."

Eddie shook his head. "I have to stay here. I have to wait for Stan." It was partly true, and partly an excuse. "Bill told me they'd be bringing the prisoners here—"

Henry was shaking his head. "Eddie, didn't anyone tell you? They left the prisoners behind. I heard Malachi say so. The city was attacked, and they evacuated the Gard, but they didn't get the prisoners out. Malachi said they were both in league with Pennywise anyway. That there was no way letting them out wouldn't be too much of a risk."

Eddie's head seemed to be full of fog; he felt dizzy, and a little sick. "That can't be true."

"It is true," Henry said. "I swear it is." His grip on Eddie's wrist tightened again, and Eddie swayed on his own feet. "I can take you up there. Up to the Gard. I can help you get him out. But you have to promise me that you'll—"

"He doesn't have to promise you anything," Richie said. "Let him go, Henry."

Henry, startled, loosened his grip on Eddie's wrist. Eddie pulled it free, turning to see Richie and Bill, both scowling. Richie's hand was resting lightly on the hilt of the seraph blade at his waist.

"Eddie can do what he wants," Henry said. He wasn't scowling, but there was an odd, fixed look about his face that was somehow worse. "And right now he wants to come with me to save his friend. The friend you got thrown in prison."

Bill blanched at that, but Richie only shook his head. “I don’t like you,” he said thoughtfully. “I know everyone else likes you, Henry, but I don’t. Maybe it’s that you work so hard to *make* people like you. Maybe I’m just a contrary bastard. But I don’t like you, and I don’t like the way you were grabbing at my boyfriend. If he wants to go up to the Gard and look for Stan, fine. He’ll go with us. Not you.”

Eddie gave a little gasp. *Boyfriend.*

Henry’s fixed expression didn’t change. “I think that should be his choice,” he said. “Don’t you?”

They both looked at Eddie. Eddie looked past them, toward Jim, still arguing with Malachi. Then to Beverly, who was talking to Mike and other werewolves.

“I want to go with Richie,” Eddie said.

Something flickered behind Henry’s eyes—something that was there and gone too quickly for Eddie to identify it, though he felt a chill at the base of his neck, as if a cold hand had touched his there. “Of course you do,” Henry said, and stepped aside.

It was Bill who moved first, pushing Richie ahead of him, making him walk. They were partway to the doors when Eddie realized that his wrist was hurting—stinging as if it had been burned. Looking down, he expected to see a mark on his wrist there, where Henry had gripped him, but there was nothing there. Just a smear of blood on his sleeve where Eddie had touched the cut on his face. Frowning, with his wrist still stinging, Eddie drew his sleeve down and hurried to catch up with the others.

18. Day of Wrath

Stan's hands were black with blood.

He had tried yanking the bars out of the window and the cell door, but touching any of them for very long seared bleeding score marks into his palms. Eventually he collapsed, gasping, on the floor, and stared numbly at his hands as the injuries swiftly healed, the lesions closing up and the blackened skin flaking away like in a video on fast-forward.

On the other side of the cell wall, Stephen was praying. “If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help—”

Stan knew he couldn't pray. He'd tried it before, and the name of God burned his mouth and choked his throat. He wondered why he could think the words but not say them. And why he could stand in the noonday sun and not die but he couldn't say his last prayers.

Smoke had begun to drift down the corridor like a purposeful ghost. He could smell burning and hear the crackle of fire spreading out of control, but he felt oddly detached, far from everything. It was strange to become a vampire, to be presented with what could only be described as an eternal life, and then to die anyway when you were sixteen.

“Stan!” The voice was faint, but his hearing caught it over the pop and crackle of growing flames. The smoke in the corridor had presaged heat; the heat was here now, pressing against him like an oppressive wall. “Stan!”

The voice was Eddie's. He would know it anywhere. He wondered if his mind was conjuring it up now, a sense memory of what he'd most loved during life to carry him through the process of death.

“Stan, you stupid idiot! I'm over here! At the window!”

Stan jumped to his feet. He doubted his mind would conjure that up.

Through the thickening smoke he saw something white moving against the bars of the window. As he came closer, the white objects evolved into hands gripping the bars. He leaped onto the cot, yelling over the sound of the fire. "Eddie?"

"Oh, thank God." One of the hands reached out, squeezed his shoulder. "We're going to get you out of here."

"How?" Stan demanded, not unreasonably, but there was the sound of a scuffle and Eddie's hands vanished, replaced a moment later by another pair. These were bigger hands, with scarred knuckles and thin pianist's fingers.

"Hang on." Richie's voice was calm, confident, for all the world as if they were chatting at a party instead of through the bars of a rapidly burning dungeon. "You might want to stand back."

Startled into obedience, Stan moved aside. Richie's hands tightened on the bars, his knuckles whitening alarmingly. There was a groaning crack, and the square of bars jerked free of the stone that held it and clattered to the ground beside the bed. Stone dust rained down in a choking white cloud.

Richie's face appeared at the empty square of window. "Stan. Come ON." He reached down.

Stan reached up and caught Richie's hands. He felt himself hauled up, and then he was grabbing at the edge of the window, lifting himself through the narrow square like a snake wriggling through a tunnel. A second later he was sprawled out on damp grass, staring up at a circle of worried faces above his. Richie, Eddie, and Bill. They were all looking down at him in concern.

"You look like crap, vampire," Richie said. "What happened to your hands?"

Stan sat up. The injuries to his hands had healed, but they were still black where he'd grabbed at the bars of his cell. Before he could reply, Eddie caught him in a sudden, fierce hug.

"Stan," Eddie breathed. "I can't believe it. I didn't even know you

were here. I thought you were in New York until last night—”

“Yeah, well,” Stan said, “I didn’t know you were here either.” He glared at Richie over her shoulder. “In fact, I think I was specifically told that you weren’t.”

“I never said that,” Richie pointed out. “I just didn’t correct you when you were, you know, wrong. Anyway, I just saved you from being burned to death, so I figure you’re not allowed to be mad.”

Burned to death. Stan pulled away from Eddie and stared around. They were in a square garden, surrounded on two sides by the walls of the fortress and on the other two sides by a heavy growth of trees. The trees had been cleared where a gravel path led down the hill to the city—it was lined with witchlight torches, but only a few were burning, their light dim and erratic. He looked up at the Gard. Seen from this angle, you could barely even tell there was a fire—black smoke stained the sky overhead, and the light in a few windows seemed unnaturally bright, but the stone walls hid their secret well.

“Stephen,” he said. “We have to get Stephen out.”

Eddie looked baffled. “Who?”

“I wasn’t the only person down there. Stephen—he was in the next cell.”

“The heap of rags I saw through the window?” Richie recalled.

“Yeah. He’s kind of weird, but he’s a good guy. We can’t leave him down there.” Stan scrambled to his feet. “Stephen? Stephen!”

There was no answer. Stan ran to the low, barred window beside the one he’d just crawled through. Through the bars he could see only swirling smoke. “Stephen! Are you in there?”

Something moved inside the smoke—something hunched and dark. Stephen’s voice, roughened by smoke, rose hoarsely. “Leave me alone! Go away!”

“Stephen! You’ll die down there.” Stan yanked at the bars. Nothing happened.

“No! Leave me alone! I want to stay!”

Stan looked desperately around to see Richie beside him. “Move,” Richie said, and when Stan leaned to the side, he kicked out with a booted foot. It connected with the bars, which tore free violently from their mooring and tumbled into Stephen’s cell. Stephen gave a hoarse shout.

“Stephen! Are you all right?” A vision of Stephen being brained by the falling bars rose up before Stan’s eyes.

Stephen’s voice rose to a scream. “GO AWAY!”

Stan looked sideways at Richie. “I think he means it.”

Richie shook his head in exasperation. “You had to make a crazy jail friend, didn’t you? You couldn’t just count ceiling tiles or tame a pet mouse like normal prisoners do?” Without waiting for an answer, he got down on the ground and crawled through the window.

“Richie!” Eddie yelled, and he and Bill hurried over, but Richie was already through the window, dropping into the cell below. Eddie shot Stan an angry look. “How could you let him do that?”

“Well, he c-couldn’t leave that guy down there to die,” Bill said unexpectedly, though he looked a little anxious himself. “It’s Richie we’re talking about here—”

He broke off as two hands rose up out of the smoke. Bill grabbed one and Stan the other, and together they hauled Stephen like a limp sack of potatoes out of the cell and deposited him on the lawn. A moment later Stan and Eddie were grabbing Richie’s hands and pulling him out, though he was considerably less limp and swore when they accidentally banged his head on the ledge. He shook them off, crawling the rest of the way onto the grass himself and then collapsing onto his back. “Ouch,” he said, staring up at the sky. “I think I pulled something.” He sat up and glanced over at Stephen. “Is he okay?”

Stephen sat hunched on the ground, his hands splayed over his face. He was rocking back and forth soundlessly.

"I think there's something wrong with him," said Bill. He reached down to touch Stephen's shoulder. Stephen jerked away, almost toppling over.

"Leave me alone," he said, his voice cracking. "Please. Leave me alone, Bill."

Bill went still all over. "W-what did you say?"

"He said to leave him alone," said Stan, but Bill wasn't looking at him, didn't even appear to notice he had spoken. He was looking at Richie—who, suddenly very pale, had already begun to rise to his feet.

"Stephen," Bill said. His tone was strangely harsh. "T-take your hands away from your face."

"No." Stephen tucked his chin down, his shoulders shaking. "No, please. No."

"Bill!" Stan protested. "Can't you see he isn't well?"

Eddie caught at Stan's sleeve. "Stan, there's something wrong."

Eddie's eyes were on Richie—when weren't they?—as he moved to stare down at the crouched figure of Stephen. The tips of Richie's fingers were bleeding where he'd scraped them on the window ledge, and when he moved to push his hair back from his eyes, they left bloody tracks across his cheek. He didn't seem to notice. His eyes were wide, his mouth a flat, angry line. "Shadowhunter," he said. His voice was deathly clear. "Show us your face."

Stephen hesitated, then dropped his hands. Stan had never seen his face before, and he hadn't realized how gaunt Stephen was, or how old he looked. His face was half-covered by a thatch of thick gray beard, the eyes swimming in dark hollows, his cheeks grooved with lines. But for all that, he was still—somehow—strangely familiar.

Bill's lips moved, but no sound came out. It was Richie who spoke.

"Keene," he said.

“Keene?” Stan echoed in confusion. “But it can’t be. Keene was ... and Stephen, he can’t be ...”

“Well, that’s just what Keene does, apparently,” Bill said bitterly. “He m-makes you think he’s someone he’s not.”

“But he said—” Stan began. Eddie’s grip tightened on his sleeve, and the words died on his lips. The expression on Keene’s face was enough. Not guilt, really, or even horror at being discovered, but a terrible grief that was hard to look at for long.

“Richard,” Keene said very quietly. “Bill ... I’m so sorry.”

Richie moved then the way he moved when he was fighting, like sunlight across water. He was standing in front of Keene with a knife out, the sharp tip of it aimed at his old tutor’s throat. The reflected glow of the fire slid off the blade. “I don’t want your apologies. I want a reason why I shouldn’t kill you right now, right here.”

“Richie.” Bill looked alarmed. “Richie, wait.”

There was a sudden roar as part of the Gard roof went up in orange tongues of flame. Heat shimmered in the air and lit the night. Eddie could see every blade of grass on the ground, every line on Keene’s thin and dirty face.

“No,” Richie said. “You knew what Pennywise did to Ben, didn’t you? You knew all his dirty secrets.”

Bill was looking uncomprehendingly from Richie to his old tutor. “What are you talking about? What’s going on?”

Keene’s face creased. “Richard ...”

“You’ve always known, and you never said anything. All those years in the Institute, and you never said anything.”

Keene’s mouth sagged. “I—I wasn’t sure,” he whispered. “When you haven’t seen a child since he was a baby—I wasn’t sure who Ben was, much less what he was.”

“Richie?” Bill was looking from his best friend to his tutor, his blue eyes dismayed, but neither of the two was paying attention to anything but the other. Keene looked like a man trapped in a tightening vise, his hands jerking at his sides as if with pain, his eyes darting. Eddie thought of the neatly dressed man in his book-lined library who had offered her tea and kindly advice. It seemed like a thousand years ago.

“I don’t believe you,” Richie said. “You knew Pennywise wasn’t dead. He must have told you—”

“He told me nothing,” Keene gasped. “When the Denbroughs informed me they were taking in Daniel Hanscom’s son, I hadn’t heard a word from Robert since the Uprising. I had thought he had forgotten me. I’d even prayed he was dead, but I never knew. And then, the night before you arrived, Gard came with a message for me from Robert. ‘The boy is my son.’ That’s all it said.” He took a ragged breath. “I had no idea whether to believe him. I thought I’d know—I thought I’d know, just looking at Ben, but there was nothing, *nothing*, to make me sure. And I thought that this was a trick of Pennywise’s, but what trick? What was he trying to do? You had no idea, that was clear enough to me, but as for Pennywise’s purpose—”

“*You should have told us,*” Richie said, all in one breath, as if the words were being punched out of him. “I could have done something about it, then. We could have done something about it.

Keene raised his head, looking up at Richie through his matted, filthy hair. “I wasn’t sure,” he said again, half to himself, “and in the times that I wondered—I thought, perhaps, that upbringing might matter more than blood; that Ben could be taught—”

“Taught what? Not to be a monster?” Richie’s voice shook, but the knife in his hand was steady. “You should know better. He made a crawling coward out of you, didn’t he? And you weren’t a helpless little kid when he did it. You could have fought back.”

Keene’s eyes fell. “I tried to do my best,” he said, but even to Eddie’s ears his words sounded weak.

“Until Pennywise came back,” Richie said, “and then you did

everything he asked of you—you gave Ben to him like he was a dog that had belonged to him once, that he'd asked you to look after for a few years—”

“And then you left,” said Bill. “Y-you left us all. Did you really think you could hide here, in Alicante?”

“I didn’t come here to hide,” said Keene, his voice lifeless. “I came here to stop Pennywise.”

“You can’t expect us to believe that.” Bill sounded angry again now. “You’ve always b-been on Pennywise’s side. You could have chosen to turn your back on him—”

“I could never have chosen that!” Keene’s voice rose. “Your parents were given their chance for a new life—I was never given that! I was trapped in the Institute for fifteen years—”

“The Institute was our home!” Bill said. “Was it really so bad living with us—being part of our family?”

“Not because of you.” Keene’s voice was ragged. “I loved you children. But you were *children*. And no place that you are never allowed to leave can be a home. I went weeks sometimes without speaking to another adult. No other Shadowhunter would trust me. Not even your parents truly liked me; they tolerated me because they had no choice. I could never marry. Never have children of my own. Never have a life. And eventually you children would have been grown and gone, and then I wouldn’t even have had that. I lived in fear, as much as I lived at all.”

“You can’t make us feel sorry for you,” Richie said. “Not after what you did. And what the hell were you afraid of, spending all your time in the library? Dust mites? We were the ones who went out and fought demons!”

“He was afraid of Pennywise,” Stan said. “Don’t you get it—”

Richie shot him a venomous look. “Shut up, vampire. This isn’t in any way about you.”

“Not Pennywise exactly,” Keene said, looking at Stan for almost the

first time since he'd been dragged from the cell. There was something in that look that surprised Eddie—a tired almost-affection. “My own weakness where Pennywise was concerned. I knew he would return someday. I knew he would make a bid for power again, a bid to rule the Clave. And I knew what he could offer me. Freedom from my curse. A life. A place in the world. I could have been a Shadowhunter again, in his world. I could never be one again in this one.” There was a naked longing in his voice that was painful to hear. “And I knew I would be too weak to refuse him if he offered it.”

“And look at the life you got,” Richie spat. “Rotting in the cells of the Gard. Was it worth it, betraying us?”

“You know the answer to that.” Keene sounded exhausted. “Pennywise took the curse off me. He'd sworn he would, and he did. I thought he'd bring me back to the Circle, or what remained of it then. He didn't. Even he didn't want me. I knew there would be no place for me in his new world. And I knew I'd sold out everything I did have for a lie.” He looked down at his clenched, filthy hands. “There was only one thing I had left—one chance to make something other than an utter waste out of my life. After I heard that Pennywise had killed the Silent Brothers—that he had the Mortal Sword—I knew he would go after the Mortal Glass next. I knew he needed all three of the Instruments. And I knew the Mortal Glass was here in Derry.”

“W-wait.” Bill held up a hand. “The Mortal Glass? You mean, you know where it is? And who has it?”

“No one has it,” said Keene. “No one could own the Mortal Glass. No Nephilim, and no Downworlder.”

“You really did go crazy down there,” Richie said, jerking his chin toward the burned-out windows of the dungeons, “didn't you?”

“Richie.” Eddie was looking anxiously up at the Gard, its roof crowned with a thorny net of red-gold flames. “The fire is spreading. We should get out of here. We can talk down in the city—”

“I was locked in the Institute for fifteen years,” Keene went on, as if Eddie hadn't spoken. “I couldn't put so much as a hand or a foot outside. I spent all my time in the library, researching ways to

remove the curse the Clave had put on me. I learned that only a Mortal Instrument could reverse it. I read book after book telling the story of the mythology of the Angel, how he rose from the lake bearing the Mortal Instruments and gave them to Jonathan Shadowhunter, the first Nephilim, and how there were three of them: Cup, Sword and Mirror.”

“We know all this,” Richie interrupted, exasperated. “You taught it to us.”

“You think you know all of it, but you don’t. As I went over and over the various versions of the histories, I happened again and again on the same illustration, the same image—we’ve all seen it—the Angel rising out of the lake with the Sword in one hand and the Cup in the other. I could never understand why the Mirror wasn’t pictured. Then I realized. The Mirror is the lake. The lake is the Mirror. They are one and the same.”

Slowly Richie lowered the knife. “Lake Lyn?”

Eddie thought of the lake, like a mirror rising to meet him, the water shattering apart on impact. “I fell in the lake when I first got here. There is something about it. Jim said it has strange properties and that the Fair Folk call it the Mirror of Dreams.”

“Exactly,” Keene began eagerly. “And I realized the Clave wasn’t aware of this, that the knowledge had been lost to time. Even Robert didn’t know—”

He was interrupted by a crashing roar, the sound of a tower at the far end of the Gard collapsing. It sent up a fireworks display of red and glittering sparks.

“Richie,” Bill said, raising his head in alarm. “Richie, we have to get out of here. Get up,” he said to Keene, yanking him upright by the arm. “You can tell the Clave what you just told us.”

Keene got shakily to his feet. What must it be like, Eddie thought with a pang of unwelcome pity, to live your life ashamed not just of what you’d done but of what you were doing and of what you knew you’d do again? Keene had given up a long time ago trying to live a

better life or a different one; all he wanted was not to be afraid, and so he was afraid all the time.

“Come on.” Bill, still gripping Keene’s arm, propelled him forward. But Richie stepped in front of them both, blocking their way.

“If Pennywise gets the Mortal Glass,” he said, “what then?”

“Richie,” Bill said, still holding Keene’s arm, “not now—”

“If he tells it to the Clave, we’ll never hear it from them,” Richie said. “To them we’re just children. But Keene owes us this.” He turned on his old tutor. “You said you realized you had to stop Pennywise. Stop him doing what? What does the Mirror give him the power to do?”

Keene shook his head. “I can’t—”

“And no lies.” The knife gleamed at Richie’s side; his hand was tight on the hilt. “Because maybe for every lie you tell me, I’ll cut off a finger. Or two.”

Keene cringed back, real fear in his eyes. Bill looked stricken. Richie. No. This not w-what you’re like.”

“Bill,” said Richie. He didn’t look at his friend, but his tone was like the touch of a regretful hand. “You don’t really know what I’m like.”

Bill’s eyes met Eddie’s across the grass. Eddie took a step forward. “Richie, Bill is right—we can take Keene down to the Hall and he can tell the Clave what he’s just told us—”

“If he’d been willing to tell the Clave, he would have done it already,” Richie snapped without looking at Eddie. “The fact that he didn’t proves he’s a liar.”

“The Clave isn’t to be trusted!” Keene protested desperately. “There are spies in it—Pennywise’s men—I couldn’t tell them where the Mirror is. If Pennywise found the Mirror, he would be—”

He never finished his sentence. Something bright silver gleamed out in the moonlight, a nail head of light in the darkness. Bill cried out. Keene’s eyes flew wide as he staggered, clawing at his chest. As he

sank backward, Eddie saw why: The hilt of a long dagger protruded from his rib cage, like the haft of an arrow bristling from its target.

Bill, leaping forward, caught his old tutor as he fell, and lowered him gently to the ground. He looked up helplessly, his face spattered with Keenee's blood. "Richie, why—"

"I didn't—" Richie's face was white, Eddie saw that he still held his knife, gripped tightly at his side. "I ..."

Stan spun around, and Eddie turned with him, staring into the darkness. The fire lit the grass with a hellish orange glow, but it was black between the trees of the hillside—and then something emerged from the blackness, a shadowy figure, with familiar dark, tumbled hair. He moved toward them, the light catching his face and reflecting off his dark eyes; they looked as if they were burning.

"*Henry?*" Eddie said.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hope you're not too disappointed Stephen King wasn't real. XD.

19. De Profundis

Richie looked wildly from Keene to Henry standing uncertainly at the edge of the garden; Richie looked almost dazed. "You," he said. "You—did this?"

"I had to do it," Henry said. "He would have killed you."

"With *what*?" Richie's voice rose and cracked. "He didn't even have a weapon—"

"Richie." Bill cut through Richie's shouting. "Come here. Help me with Keene."

"He would have killed you," Henry said again. "He would have—"

But Richie had gone to kneel beside Bill, sheathing his knife at his belt. Bill was holding Keene in his arms, blood on his own shirtfront now. "Take the stele from my pocket," he said to Richie. "Try an *iratze*—"

Eddie, stiff with horror, felt Stan stir beside him. Eddie turned to look at him and was shocked—he was white as paper except for a hectic red flush on both cheekbones. He could see the veins snaking under Stan's skin, like the growth of some delicate, branching coral. "The blood," he whispered, not looking at anyone. "I have to get away from it."

Eddie reached to catch his sleeve, but Stan lurched back, jerking his arm out of his grasp.

"No, Eddie, please. Let me go. I'll be okay; I'll be back. I just—" Eddie started after him, but he was too quick for him to hold him back. He vanished into the darkness between the trees.

"Keene—" Bill sounded panicked. "Keene, hold still—"

But his tutor was struggling feebly, trying to pull away from him, away from the stele in Richie's hand. "No." Keene's face was the color of putty. His eyes darted from Richie to Henry, who was still hanging back in the shadows. "Richard—"

“Richie,” Richie said, almost in a whisper. “Call me Richie.”

Keene’s eyes rested on him. Eddie could not decipher the look in them. Pleading, yes, but something more than that, filled with dread, or something like it, and with need. He lifted a warding hand. “Not him,” he whispered, and blood spilled from his mouth with the words.

A look of hurt flashed across Richie’s face. “Bill, do the *iratze*—I don’t think he wants me to touch him.”

Keene’s hand tightened into a claw; he clutched at Richie’s sleeve. The rattle of his breath was audible. “Ben was... never ...”

And he died. Eddie could tell the moment the life left him. It was not a quiet, instant thing, like in a movie; his voice choked off in a gurgle and his eyes rolled back and he went limp and heavy, his arm bent awkwardly under him.

Bill closed Keene’s eyes with his fingertips. “*Vale*, Norbert Keene.”

“He doesn’t deserve that.” Henry’s voice was sharp. “He wasn’t a Shadowhunter; he was a traitor. He doesn’t deserve the last words.”

Bill’s head jerked up. He lowered Keene to the ground and rose to his feet, his blue eyes like ice. Blood streaked his clothes. “You know nothing about it. You killed an unarmed man, a Nephilim. You’re a murderer.”

Henry’s lip curled. “You think I don’t know who that was?” He gestured at Keene. “Keene was in the Circle. He betrayed the Clave then and was cursed for it. He should have died for what he did, but the Clave was lenient—and where did it get them? He betrayed us all again when he sold the Mortal Cup to Pennywise just to get his curse lifted—a curse he deserved.” He paused, breathing hard. “I shouldn’t have done it, but you can’t say he didn’t deserve it.”

“How do you know so much about Keene?” Eddie demanded. “And what are you doing here? I thought you agreed to stay back at the Hall.”

Henry hesitated. “You were taking so long,” he said finally. “I got

worried. I thought you might need my help.”

“So you decided to help us by *killing the guy we were talking to*?” Eddie demanded. “Because you thought he had a shady past? Who—who *does* that? It doesn’t make any sense.”

“That’s because he’s lying,” Richie said. He was looking at Henry—a cold, considering look. “And not well. I thought you’d be a little faster on your feet there, Bowers.”

Henry met his look evenly. “I don’t know what you mean, Tozier.”

“He means,” said Bill, stepping forward, “that if you r-really think what you just did was justified, you won’t mind coming with us to the Accords Hall and explaining yourself to the Council. Will you?”

A beat passed before Henry smiled—the smile that had charmed Eddie before, but now there was something a little off-kilter about it, like a picture hanging slightly crookedly on a wall. “Of course not.” He moved toward them slowly, almost strolling, as if he didn’t have a worry in the world. As if he hadn’t just committed murder. “Of course,” he said, “it is a little odd that you’re so upset that I killed a man when Richie was planning on cutting his fingers off one by one.”

Bill’s mouth tightened. “He w-wouldn’t have done it.”

“*You*—” Richie looked at Henry with loathing. “You have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Or maybe,” Henry said, “you’re really just angry because I kissed your precious Eddie. Because he wanted me.”

“I did *not*,” Eddie said, but neither of them was looking at him. “Want you, I mean.”

“He has this little habit, you know—the way he gasps when you kiss him, like he’s surprised?” Henry had come to a stop now, just in front of Richie, and was smiling like an angel. “It’s rather endearing; you must have noticed it.”

Richie looked as if he wanted to throw up. “Eddie—”

“Why are you doing this?” Eddie said. “Henry, why are you saying all these things?”

“Because I finally can,” Henry said. “You’ve no idea what it’s been like, being around the lot of you these past few days, having to pretend I could stand you. That the sight of you didn’t make me sick. You,” he said to Richie, “every second you’re not panting after your little Eddie, you’re whining on and on about how your daddy didn’t love you. Well, who could blame him? And you, you stupid twat”—he turned to Eddie—“giving that priceless book away to a half-breed warlock; have you got a single brain cell in that tiny head of yours? And you—” He directed his next sneer at Bill. “I think we all know what’s wrong with *you*. They shouldn’t let your kind in the Clave. You’re embarrassing.”

Bill paled, though he looked more astonished than anything else. Eddie couldn’t blame him—it was hard to look at Henry, at his angelic smile, and imagine he could say these things. “*Pretend* you could stand us?” Eddie echoed. “But why would you have to pretend that unless you were ... unless you were spying on us,” he finished, realizing the truth even as he spoke it. “Unless you were a spy for Pennywise.”

Henry’s handsome face twisted, the full mouth flattening, his long, elegant eyes narrowing to slits. “And finally they get it,” he said. “I swear, there are utterly lightless demon dimensions out there that are less dim than the bunch of you.”

“We may not be all that bright,” Richie said, “but at least we’re alive.”

Henry looked at him in disgust. “I’m alive,” he pointed out.

“Not for long,” said Richie. Moonlight exploded off the blade of his knife as he flung himself at Henry, his motion so fast that it seemed blurred, faster than any human movement Eddie had ever seen.

Until now.

Henry darted aside, missing the blow, and caught Richie’s knife arm as it descended. The knife clattered to the ground, and then Henry

had Richie by the back of his jacket. He lifted him and flung him with incredible strength. Richie flew through the air, hit the wall of the Gard with bone-cracking force, and crumpled to the ground.

“Richie!” Eddie’s vision went white. He ran at Henry to choke the life out of him. But Henry sidestepped him and brought his hand down as casually as if he were swatting an insect aside. The blow caught Eddie hard on the side of the head, sending him spinning to the ground. He rolled over, blinking a red mist of pain out of his eyes.

Bill had taken his bow from his back; it was drawn, an arrow notched at the ready. His hands didn’t waver as he aimed at Henry. “S-stay where you are,” he said, “and put your hands behind your back.”

Henry laughed. “You wouldn’t really shoot me,” he said. He moved toward Bill with an easy, careless step, as if he were striding up the stairs to his own front door.

Bill’s eyes narrowed. His hands went up in a graceful, even series of movements; he drew the arrow back and loosed it. It flew toward Henry—

And missed. Henry had ducked or moved somehow, Eddie couldn’t tell, and the arrow had gone past him, lodging in the trunk of a tree. Bill had time only for a momentary look of surprise before Henry was on him, wrenching the bow out of his grasp. Henry snapped it in his hands—cracked it in half, and the crack of the splintering made Eddie wince as if he were hearing bones splinter. He tried to drag himself into a sitting position, ignoring the searing pain in his head. Richie was lying a few feet away from him, utterly still. Eddie tried to get up, but his legs didn’t seem to be working properly.

Henry tossed the shattered halves of the bow aside and closed in on Bill. Bill already had a seraph blade out, glittering in his hand, but Henry swept it aside as Bill came at him—swept it aside and caught Henry by the throat, almost lifting him off his feet. He squeezed mercilessly, viciously, grinning as Bill choked and struggled. “Denbrough,” he breathed. “I’ve taken care of one of you already today. I hadn’t expected I’d be lucky enough to get to do it twice.”

He jerked backward, like a puppet whose strings had been yanked.

Released, Bill slumped to the ground, his hands at his throat. Eddie could hear his rattling, desperate breath—but his eyes were on Henry. A dark shadow had affixed itself to his back and was clinging to him like a leech. He clawed at his throat, gagging and choking as he spun in place, clawing at the thing that had hold of his throat. As he turned, the moonlight fell on him, and Eddie saw what it was.

It was Stan. His arms were wrapped around Henry's neck, his white incisors glittering like bone needles. It was the first time Eddie had seen him actually look fully like a vampire since the night he'd risen from his grave, and she stared in horrified amazement, unable to look away. His lips were curled back in a snarl, his fangs fully extended and sharp as daggers. He sank them into Henry's forearm, opening up a long red tear in the skin.

Henry yelled out loud and flung himself backward, landing hard on the ground. He rolled, Stan half on top of him, the two of them clawing at each other, tearing and snarling like dogs in a pit. Henry was bleeding in several places when he finally staggered to his feet and delivered two hard kicks to Stan's rib cage. Stan doubled over, clutching his midsection. "You foul little tick," Henry snarled, drawing his foot back for another blow.

"I wouldn't," said a quiet voice.

Eddie's head jerked up, sending another starburst of pain shooting behind his eyes. Richie stood a few feet from Henry. His face was bloody, one eye swollen nearly shut, but in one hand was a blazing seraph blade, and the hand that held it was steady. "I've never killed a human being with one of these before," said Richie. "But I'm willing to try."

Henry's face twisted. He glanced down once at Stan, and then raised his head and spat. The words he said after that were in a language Eddie didn't recognize—and then he turned with the same terrifying swiftness with which he'd moved when he'd attacked Richie, and vanished into the darkness.

"No!" Eddie cried. He tried to raise himself to his feet, but the pain was like an arrow searing its way through his brain. He crumpled to the damp grass. A moment later Richie was leaning over him, his face

pale and anxious. Eddie looked up at him, his vision blurring—it had to be blurred, didn't it, or he could never have imagined that whiteness around Richie, a sort of light—

He heard Stan's voice and then Bill's, and something was handed down to Richie—a stele. Eddie's arm burned, and a moment later the pain began to recede, and his head cleared. He blinked up at the three faces hovering over his. "My head ..."

"You have a concussion," Richie said. "The *iratze* should help, but we ought to get you to a Clave doctor. Head injuries can be tricky." He handed the stele back to Bill. "Do you think you can stand up?"

Eddie nodded. It was a mistake. Pain shot through him again as hands reached down and helped him to his feet. Stan. He leaned against him gratefully, waiting for his balance to return. He still felt as if he might fall over at any minute.

Richie was scowling. "You shouldn't have attacked Henry like that. You didn't even have a weapon. What were you thinking?"

"What we were all t-thinking." Bill, unexpectedly, came to her defense. "That he'd just thrown you through the air like a softball. Richie, I've never s-seen anyone get the better of you like that."

"I—he surprised me," Richie said a little reluctantly. "He must have had some kind of special training. I wasn't expecting it."

"Yeah, well." Stan touched his rib cage, wincing. "I think he kicked in a couple of my ribs. It's okay," he added at Eddie's worried look. "They're healing. But Henry's definitely strong. Really strong." He looked at Richie. "How long do you think he was standing there in the shadows?"

Richie looked grim. He glanced among the trees in the direction Henry had gone. "Well, the Clave will catch him—and curse him, probably. I'd like to see them put the same curse on him they put on Keene. That would be poetic justice."

Stan turned aside and spat into the bushes. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, his face twisted into a grimace. "His blood

tastes foul—like poison.”

“I suppose we can add that to his list of charming qualities,” said Richie. “I wonder what else he was up to tonight.”

“We need to get back to the Hall.” The look on Bill’s face was strained, and Eddie remembered that Henry had said something to him, something about the other Denbroughs.... “Can you walk, Eddie?”

Eddie drew away from Stan. “I can walk. What about Keene? We can’t just leave him.”

“We have to,” said Bill. “There’ll be time to c-come back for him if we all survive the night.”

As they left the garden, Richie paused, drew off his jacket, and laid it over Keene’s slack, upturned face. Eddie wanted to go to Richie, put a hand on his shoulder even, but something in the way he held himself told Eddie not to. Even Bill didn’t go near him or offer a healing rune, despite the fact that Richie was limping as he walked down the hill.

They moved together down the zigzag path, weapons drawn and at the ready, the sky lit red by the burning Gard behind them. But they saw no demons. The stillness and eerie light made Eddie’s head throb; he felt as if he were in a dream. Exhaustion gripped him like a vise. Just putting one foot in front of the other was like lifting a block of cement and slamming it down, over and over. He could hear Richie and Bill talking up ahead on the path, their voices faintly blurred despite their proximity.

Bill was speaking softly, almost pleading. “Richie, the way you were talking up there, to Keene. You can’t think like that, you have to s-see it’s not your fault—”

“I don’t want to talk about this, Bill. Not now, not ever. Don’t ask me about it again.” Richie’s tone was savage, and Bill fell silent. Eddie could almost feel his hurt. What a night, Eddie thought. A night of so much pain for everyone.

He tried not to think of Keene, of the pleading, pitiful look on his face

before he'd died. Eddie hadn't liked Keene, but he hadn't deserved what Henry had done to him. No one did. Eddie thought of Henry, of the way he'd moved, like sparks flying. He'd never seen anyone move like that. He wanted to puzzle it out—what had happened to Henry? How had a cousin of the Mayfields managed to go so wrong, and how had they never noticed? He'd thought Henry had wanted to help him save his mother, but he'd only wanted to get the Book of the White for Pennywise. Eleven had been wrong—it hadn't been because of the Denbroughs that Pennywise had found out about Kali Prasad. It had been because he'd told Henry. How could he have been so stupid?

Appalled, Eddie barely noticed as the path turned into an avenue, leading them into the city. The streets were deserted, the houses dark, many of the witchlight streetlamps smashed, their glass scattered across the cobblestones. Voices were audible, echoing as if at a distance, and the gleam of torches was visible here and there among the shadows between buildings, but—

"It's awfully quiet," Bill said, looking around in surprise. "And—"

"It doesn't stink like demons." Richie frowned. "Strange. Come on. Let's get to the Hall."

Though Eddie was half-braced for an attack, they didn't see a single demon as they moved through the streets. Not a live one, at least—though as they passed a narrow alley, he saw a group of three or four Shadowhunters gathered in a circle around something that pulsed and twitched on the ground. They were taking turns stabbing it with long, sharpened poles. With a shudder he looked away.

The Hall of Accords was lit like a bonfire, witchlight pouring out of its doors and windows. They hurried up the stairs, Eddie steadying himself when he stumbled. His dizziness was getting worse. The world seemed to be swinging around him, as if he stood inside a great spinning globe. Above him, the stars were white-painted streaks across the sky. "You should lie down," Stan said, and then, when Eddie said nothing, "Eddie?"

With an enormous effort, Eddie forced himself to smile at Stan. "I'm all right."

Richie, standing at the entrance to the Hall, looked back at him in silence. In the harsh glare of the witchlight, the blood on his face and his swollen eye looked ugly, streaked and black.

There was a dull roar inside the Hall, the low murmur of hundreds of voices. To Eddie it sounded like the beating of an enormous heart. The lights of the bracketed torches, coupled with the glow of witchlights carried everywhere, seared his eyes and fragmented his vision; he could see only vague shapes now, vague shapes and colors. White, gold, and then the night sky above, fading from dark to paler blue. How late was it?

“I d-don’t see them.” Bill, casting anxiously around the room for his family, sounded as if he were a hundred miles off, or deep underwater. “They should be here by now—”

His voice faded as Eddie’s dizziness worsened. Eddie put a hand against a nearby pillar to steady himself. A hand brushed across his back—Stan. He was saying something to Richie, sounding anxious. His voice faded into the pattern of dozens of others, rising and falling around Eddie like waves breaking.

“Never seen anything like it. The demons just turned around and left, just vanished.”

“Sunrise, probably. They’re afraid of sunrise, and it’s not far off.”

“No, it was more than that.”

“You just don’t want to think they’ll be back the next night, or the next.”

“Don’t say that; there’s no reason to say that. They’ll get the wards back up.”

“And Pennywise will just take them down again.”

“Maybe it’s no better than we deserve. Maybe Pennywise was right—maybe allying ourselves with Downworlders means we’ve lost the Angel’s blessing.”

“Hush. Have some respect. They’re tallying the dead out in Angel

Square.”

“There they are,” Bill said. “O-over there, by the dais. It looks like ...” His voice trailed off, and then he was gone, pushing his way through the crowd. Eddie squinted, trying to sharpen his vision. All he could see were blurs—

He heard Richie catch his breath, and then, without another word, he was shoving through the crowd after Bill. Eddie let go of the pillar, meaning to follow them, but stumbled. Stan caught him.

“You need to lie down, Eddie,” he said.

“No,” he whispered. “I want to see what happened—”

Eddie broke off. Stan was staring past him, after Richie, and he looked stricken. Bracing himself against the pillar, Eddie raised himself up on his toes, struggling to see over the crowd—

There they were, the Denbroughs: Sharon with her arms around Ben, who was sobbing, and Zack Denbrough sitting on the ground and holding something—no, *someone*, and Eddie thought of the time he had seen Georgie at the Institute, lying limp and asleep on a couch, his glasses knocked askew and his hand trailing along the floor. *He can sleep anywhere*, Richie had said, and he almost looked as if he were sleeping now, in his father’s lap, but Eddie knew he wasn’t.

Bill was on his knees, holding one of Georgie’s hands, but Richie was just standing where he was, not moving, and more than anything else he looked lost, as if he had no idea where he was or what he was doing there. All Eddie wanted was to run to him and put his arms around him, but the look on Stan’s face told him no, no, and so did his memory of the manor house and Richie’s arms around him there. Eddie was the last person on earth who could ever give him any comfort.

“Eddie,” Stan said, but Eddie was pulling away from him, despite his dizziness and the pain in his head. Eddie ran for the doors of the Hall and pushed them open, ran out onto the steps and stood there, gulping down breaths of cold air. In the distance the horizon was streaked with red fire, the stars fading, bleached out of the lightening

sky. The night was over. Dawn had come.

Notes for the Chapter:

Rest In Peace, Georgie :(
Please don't hate me :((((((((((

20. Where There Is Sorrow

Eddie woke gasping out of a dream of bleeding angels, his sheets twisted around him in a tight spiral. It was pitch-black and close in Amatis's spare bedroom, like being locked in a coffin. He reached out and twitched the curtains open. Daylight poured in. He frowned and pulled them shut again.

Shadowhunters burned their dead, and ever since the demon attack, the sky to the west of the city had been stained with smoke. Looking at it out the window made Eddie feel sick, so he kept the curtains closed. In the darkness of the room he closed his eyes, trying to remember his dream. There had been angels in it, and the image of the rune Ithuriel had showed him, flashing over and over against the inside of his eyelids like a blinking WALK sign. It was a simple rune, as simple as a tied knot, but no matter how hard he concentrated, he couldn't read it, couldn't figure out what it meant. All he knew was that it seemed somehow incomplete to him, as if whoever had created the pattern hadn't quite finished it.

These are not the first dreams I have ever showed you, Ithuriel had said. Eddie thought of his other dreams: of Stan with crosses burned into his hands, Richie with wings, lakes of cracking ice that shone like mirror glass. Had the angel sent him those, too?

With a sigh he sat up. The dreams might be bad, but the waking images that marched across his brain weren't much better. Ben, weeping on the floor of the Hall of Accords. Sharon shrieking at Susan Mayfield that the boy they'd brought into their house had done this, their cousin, and if he was so closely allied with Pennywise, what did that say about them? Bill trying to calm his mother down, asking Richie to help him, but Richie just standing there as the sun rose over Alicante and blazed down through the ceiling of the Hall. "It's dawn," Jim had said, looking more tired than Eddie had ever seen him. "Time to bring the bodies inside." And he'd sent out patrols to gather up the dead Shadowhunters and lycanthropes lying in the streets and bring them to the plaza outside the Hall, the plaza Eddie had crossed with Henry when he'd commented that the Hall looked like a church. It had seemed like a pretty place to him then, lined

with flower boxes and brightly painted shops. And now it was full of corpses.

Including Georgie. Thinking of the little boy who'd so gravely talked about manga with him made Eddie's stomach knot. He'd promised once that he'd take him to Forbidden Planet, but that would never happen now. *I would have bought him books*, Eddie thought. *Whatever books he wanted*. Not that it mattered.

Don't think about it. Eddie kicked his sheets back and got up. After a quick shower he changed into the jeans and sweater he'd worn the day he'd come from New York. He pressed his face to the material before he put the sweater on, hoping to catch a whiff of Brooklyn, or the smell of laundry detergent—something to remind him of home—but it had been washed and smelled like lemon soap. With another sigh, he headed downstairs.

The house was empty except for Stan, sitting on the couch in the living room. The open windows behind him streamed daylight. He'd become like a cat, Eddie thought, always seeking out available patches of sunlight to curl up in. No matter how much sun he got, though, his skin stayed the same ivory white.

Eddie picked an apple out of the bowl on the table and sank down next to him, curling his legs up under him. "Did you get any sleep?"

"Some." He looked at Eddie. "I ought to ask you that. You're the one with the shadows under your eyes. More nightmares?"

Eddie shrugged. "Same stuff. Death, destruction, bad angels."

"So a lot like real life, then."

"Yeah, but at least when I wake up, it's over." He took a bite out of his apple. "Let me guess. Jim and Amatis are at the Accords Hall, having another meeting."

"Yeah. I think they're having the meeting where they get together and decide what other meetings they need to have."

"Beverly?"

“Hanging around with Mike.” Stan picked idly at the fringe edging a throw pillow. “Have you heard anything from Eleven?”

“No.” Eddie was trying not to think about the fact that it had been three days since he’d seen Eleven, and she’d sent no word at all. Or the fact that there was really nothing stopping her from taking the Book of the White and disappearing into the ether, never to be heard from again. He wondered why he’d ever thought trusting someone who wore that much eyeliner was a good idea.

He touched Stan’s wrist lightly. “And you? What about you? You’re still okay here?” He’d wanted Stan to go home the moment the battle was over—home, where it was safe. But he’d been strangely resistant. For whatever reason, he seemed to want to stay. Eddie hoped it wasn’t because he thought he had to take care of him—he’d nearly come out and told Stan he didn’t need his protection—but he hadn’t, because part of him couldn’t bear to see Stan go. So he stayed, and Eddie was secretly, guiltily glad. “You’re getting—you know—what you need?”

“You mean blood? Yeah, Mike’s still bringing me bottles every day. Don’t ask me where he gets it, though.” The first morning Stan and Beverly had been at Amatis’s house, a grinning lycanthrope had showed up on the doorstep with a live cat for him. “Blood,” he’d said, in a heavily accented voice. “For you. Fresh!” Stan had thanked the werewolf, waited for him to leave, and let the cat go, his expression faintly green.

“Well, you’re going to have to get your blood from somewhere,” Jim had said, looking amused.

“I have a pet cat,” Stan had replied. “There’s no way.”

“I’ll tell Mike,” Jim had promised, and from then on the blood had come in discreet glass milk bottles. Eddie had no idea how Mike was arranging it and, like Stan, didn’t want to ask. He hadn’t seen the werewolf boy since the night of the battle—the lycanthropes were camped somewhere in the nearby forest, with only Jim in the city.

“What’s up?” Stan leaned his head back, looking at him through his lowered eyelashes. “You look like you want to ask me something.”

There were several things Eddie wanted to ask him, but he decided to go for one of the safer options. “Keene,” he said, and hesitated. “When you were in the cell—you really didn’t know it was him?”

“I couldn’t see him. I could just hear him through the wall. We talked—a lot.”

“And you liked him? I mean, he was nice?”

“Nice? I don’t know. Tortured, sad, intelligent, compassionate in brief flashes—yeah, I liked him. I think I sort of reminded him of himself, in a way—”

“Don’t say that!” Eddie sat up straight, almost dropping his apple. “You’re nothing like Keene was.”

“You don’t think I’m tortured and intelligent?”

“Keene was evil. You’re not.” Eddie spoke decidedly. “That’s all there is to it.”

Stan sighed. “People aren’t born good or bad. Maybe they’re born with tendencies either way, but it’s the way you live your life that matters. And the people you know. Pennywise was Keene’s friend, and I don’t think Keene really had anyone else in his life to challenge him or make him be a better person. If I’d had that life, I don’t know how I would have turned out. But I didn’t. I have my family. And I have you.”

Eddie smiled at him, but his words rang painfully in his ears. People aren’t born good or bad. He’d always thought that was true, but in the images the angel had showed him, he’d seen his mother call her own child evil, a monster. He wished he could tell Stan about it, tell him everything the angel had showed him, but he couldn’t. It would have meant telling what they’d discovered about Ben, and that he couldn’t do. It wasn’t Eddie’s secret to tell. Stan had asked him once what Richie had meant when he’d spoken to Keene, why he’d called Ben a monster, but Eddie had only answered that it was hard to understand what Richie meant by anything at the best of times. He wasn’t sure Stan had believed her, but he hadn’t asked again.

Eddie was saved from saying anything at all by a loud knock on the door. With a frown, Eddie set his apple core down on the table. "I'll get it."

The open door let in a wave of cold, fresh air. Max Mayfield stood on the front steps, wearing a dark pink silk jacket that almost matched the circles under her eyes. "I need to talk to you," she said without preamble.

Surprised, Eddie could only nod and hold the door open. "All right. Come on in."

"Thanks." Max pushed past him brusquely and went into the living room. She froze when she saw Stan sitting on the couch, her lips parting in astonishment. "Isn't that ..."

"The vampire?" Stan grinned. The slight but inhuman acuity of his incisors was just visible against his lower lip when he grinned like that. Eddie wished he wouldn't.

Max turned to Eddie. "Can I talk to you alone?"

"No," Eddie said, and sat down on the couch next to Stan. "Anything you have to say, you can say to both of us."

Max bit her lip. "Fine. Look, I have something I want to tell Bill and Richie and Ben, but I have no idea where to find them right now."

Eddie sighed. "They pulled some strings and got into an empty house. The family in it left for the country."

Max nodded. A lot of people had left since the attacks. Most had stayed—more than Eddie would have expected—but quite a few had packed up and departed, leaving their houses standing empty.

"They're okay, if that's what you want to know. Look, I haven't seen them either. Not since the battle. I could pass on a message through Jim if you want—"

"I don't know." Max was chewing her lower lip. "My parents had to tell Henry's aunt in Paris what he did. She was really upset."

“As one would be if one’s nephew turned out to be an evil mastermind,” said Stan.

Max shot him a dark look. “She said it was completely unlike him, that there must be some mistake. So she sent me some photos of him.” Max reached into her pocket and drew out several slightly bent photographs, which she handed to Eddie. “Look.”

Eddie looked. The photographs showed a laughing dark-haired boy, handsome in an off-kilter sort of way, with a crooked grin and a slightly-too-big nose. He looked like the sort of boy it would be fun to hang out with. He also looked nothing at all like Henry. “*This is your cousin?*”

“That’s Henry Bowers. Which means—”

“That the boy who was here, who was calling himself Henry, is someone else entirely?” Eddie riffled through the photos with increasing agitation.

“I thought—” Max was worrying her lip again. “I thought that if the Denbroughs knew Henry—or whoever that boy was—wasn’t really my cousin, maybe they’d forgive me. Forgive *us*.”

“I’m sure they will.” Eddie made his voice as kind as he could. “But this is bigger than that. The Clave will want to know that Henry wasn’t just some misguided Shadowhunter kid. Pennywise sent him here deliberately as a spy.”

“He was just so convincing,” Max said. “He knew things only my family knows. He knew things from our childhood—”

“It kind of makes you wonder,” said Stan, “what happened to the real Henry. Your cousin. It sounds like he left Paris, headed to Derry, and never actually got here. So what happened to him on the way?”

Eddie answered. “Pennywise happened. He must have planned it all and known where Henry would be and how to intercept him on the way. And if he did that with Henry—”

“Then there may be others,” said Max. “You should tell the Clave. Tell Jimothy Hopper” She caught Eddie’s surprised look. “People

listen to him. My parents said so.”

“Maybe you should come to the Hall with us,” Stan suggested. “Tell him yourself.”

Max shook her head. “I can’t face the Denbroughs. Especially Ben. He saved my life, and I—I just ran away. I couldn’t stop myself. I just ran.”

“You were in shock. It’s not your fault.”

Max looked unconvinced. “And now his brother—” he broke off, biting her lip again. “Anyway. Look, there’s something I’ve been meaning to tell you, Eddie.”

“To tell *me*?” Eddie was baffled.

“Yes.” Max took a deep breath. “Look, what you walked in on, with me and Richie, it wasn’t anything. *I* kissed *him*. It was—an experiment. And it didn’t really work.”

Eddie felt himself blushing what he thought must be a truly spectacular red. *Why is she telling me this?* “Look, it’s okay. It’s Richie’s business, not mine.”

“Well, you seemed pretty upset at the time.” A small smile played around the corners of Max’s mouth. “And I think I know why.”

Eddie swallowed against the acid taste in his mouth. “You do?”

“You don’t need to worry, though. He’s not my type.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard a girl say that before,” said Stan. “I thought Richie was the kind of guy who was everyone’s type.”

“I thought so too,” Max said slowly, “which is why I kissed him. I was trying to figure out if *any* guy is my type.”

She kissed Richie, Eddie thought. *He didn’t kiss her. She kissed him.* He met Stan’s eyes over Max’s head. Stan was looking amused. “Well, what’d you decide?”

Max shrugged. “Not sure yet. But, hey, at least you don’t have Richie to worry about.”

If only. “I always have Richie to worry about.”

The space inside the Hall of Accords had been swiftly reconfigured since the night of the battle. With the Gard gone it now served as a Council chamber, a gathering place for people looking for missing family members, and a place to learn the latest news. The central fountain was dry, and on either side of it long benches were drawn up in rows facing a raised dais at the far end of the room. While some Nephilim were seated on the benches in what looked like a Council session, in the aisles and beneath the arcades that ringed the great room dozens of other Shadowhunters were milling anxiously. The Hall no longer looked like a place where anyone would consider dancing. There was a peculiar atmosphere in the air, a mixture of tension and anticipation.

Despite the gathering of the Clave in the center, murmured conversations were everywhere. Eddie caught snippets of chatter as he and Stan moved through the room: The demon towers were working again. The wards were back up, but weaker than before. The wards were back up, but stronger than before. Demons had been sighted on the hills south of the city. The country houses were abandoned, more families had left the city, and some had left the Clave altogether.

On the raised dais, surrounded by hanging maps of the city, stood the Consul, glowering like a bodyguard beside a short, plump man in gray. The plump man was gesticulating angrily as he spoke, but no one seemed to be paying any attention.

“Oh, crap, that’s the Inquisitor,” Stan muttered in Eddie’s ear, pointing. “Brenner.”

“And there’s Jim,” Eddie said, picking him out from the crowd. He stood near the dry fountain, deep in conversation with a man in heavily scuffed gear and a bandage covering the left half of his face. Eddie looked around for Amatis and finally saw her, sitting silently at

the end of a bench, as far away from the other Shadowhunters as she could get. She caught sight of Eddie and made a startled face, beginning to rise to her feet.

Jim saw Eddie, frowned, and spoke to the bandaged man in a low voice, excusing himself. He crossed the room to where Eddie and Stan stood by one of the pillars, his frown deepening as he approached. "What are you doing here? You know the Clave doesn't allow children into its meetings, and as for you—" He glared at Stan. "It's probably not the best idea for you to show your face in front of the Inquisitor, even if there isn't really anything he can do about it." A smile twitched the corner of his mouth. "Not without jeopardizing any alliance the Clave might want to have with Downworlders in the future, anyway."

"That's right." Stan wiggled his fingers in a wave at the Inquisitor, which Brenner ignored.

"Stan, stop it. We're here for a reason." Eddie thrust the photographs of Henry at Jim. "This is Henry Bowers. The *real* Henry Bowers."

Jim's expression darkened. He shuffled through the photos without saying anything as Eddie repeated the story Max had told him. Stan, meanwhile, stood uneasily, glowering across the room at Brenner, who was studiously ignoring him.

"So does the real Henry look much like the imposter version?" Jim asked finally.

"Not really," Eddie said. "The fake Henry was taller. And I think he was probably blond, because he was definitely dyeing his hair. No one has hair that black." *And the dye came off on my fingers when I touched it*, he thought, but kept the thought to himself. "Anyway, Max wanted us to show these to you and to the Denbroughs. She thought maybe if they knew he wasn't really related to the Mayfields, then—"

"She hasn't told her parents about these, has she?" Jim indicated the photos.

"Not yet, I think," Eddie said. "I think she came straight to me. She wanted me to tell you. She said people listen to you."

"Maybe some of them do." Jim glanced back at the man with the bandaged face. "I was just talking to Neil Mayfield, actually. Pennywise was a good friend of his back in the day and may have kept tabs on the Mayfield family in one way or another in the years since. You said Keene told you he had spies here." He handed the photos back to Eddie. "Unfortunately, the Denbroughs aren't going to be part of the Council today. This morning was George's funeral. They're most likely in the cemetery." Seeing the look on Eddie's face, he added, "It was a very small ceremony, Eddie. Just the family."

But I am Ben's family, said a small, protesting voice inside his head.

"Then you can tell them tonight, maybe," Eddie said instead. "I mean—I think it'll be good news. Whoever Henry really is, he isn't related to their friends."

"It'd be better news if we knew where he was," Jim muttered. "Or what other spies Pennywise has here. There must have been several of them, at least, involved in taking down the wards. It could only have been done from inside the city."

"Keene said Pennywise had figured out how to do it," said Stan. "He said that you need demon blood to take the wards down, but that there was no way to get demon blood into the city. Except that Pennywise had figured out a way."

"Someone painted a rune in demon blood on the apex of one of the towers," Jim said with a sigh, "so, clearly, Keene was right. Unfortunately, the Clave has always trusted too much in their wards. But even the cleverest puzzle has a solution."

"It seems to me like the sort of clever that gets your butt kicked in gaming," Stan said. "The second you protect your fortress with a Spell of Total Invincibility, someone comes along and figures out how to trash the place."

"Stan," Eddie said. "Shut up."

"He's not so far off," said Jim. "We just don't know how they got demon blood into the city without setting the wards off in the first place." He shrugged. "It's the least of our problems at the moment."

The wards are back up, but we already know they're not foolproof. Pennywise could return at any moment with an even bigger force of arms, and I doubt we could fight him off. There aren't enough Nephilim, and those who are here are utterly demoralized."

"But what about the Downworlders?" Eddie said. "You told the Consul that the Clave had to fight with the Downworlders."

"I can tell Malachi and Brenner that until I'm blue in the face, but it doesn't mean they'll listen," Jim said wearily. "The only reason they're even letting me stay here is because the Clave voted to keep me on as an adviser. And they only did that because quite a few of them had their lives saved by my pack. But that doesn't mean they want more Downworlders in Derry—"

Someone screamed.

Amatis was on her feet, her hand over her mouth, staring toward the front of the Hall. A man stood in the doorway, framed in the glow of the sunlight outside. He was only a silhouette, until he took a step forward, into the Hall, and Eddie could see his face for the first time.

Pennywise.

For some reason the first thing Eddie noticed was that he was clean-shaven. It made him look younger, more like the angry boy in the memories Ithuriel had showed him. Instead of battle dress, he wore an elegantly cut pin-striped suit and a tie. He was unarmed. He could have been any man walking down the streets of Manhattan. He could have been anyone's father.

He didn't look toward Eddie, didn't acknowledge his presence at all. His eyes were on Jim as he walked up the narrow aisle between the benches.

How could he come in here like this without any weapons? Eddie wondered, and had his question answered a moment later: Inquisitor Brenner made a noise like a wounded bear; tore himself away from Malachi, who was trying to hold him back; staggered down the dais steps; and hurled himself at Pennywise.

He passed through Pennywise's body like a knife tearing through paper. Pennywise turned to watch Brenner with an expression of bland interest as the Inquisitor staggered, collided with a pillar, and sprawled awkwardly to the ground. The Consul, following, bent to help him to his feet—there was a look of barely concealed disgust on his face as he did it, and Eddie wondered if the disgust was directed at Pennywise or at Brenner for acting like such a fool.

Another faint murmur carried around the room. The Inquisitor squeaked and struggled like a rat in a trap, Malachi holding him firmly by the arms as Pennywise proceeded into the room without another glance at either of them. The Shadowhunters who had been clustered around the benches drew back, like the waves of the Red Sea parting for Moses, leaving a clear path down the center of the room. Eddie shivered as Pennywise drew closer to where he stood with Jim and Stan. *He's only a Projection*, he told himself. *Not really here. He can't hurt you.*

Beside him, Stan shuddered. Eddie took his hand just as Pennywise paused at the steps of the dais and turned to look directly at him. His eyes raked Eddie once, casually, as if taking his measure; passed over Stan entirely; and came to rest on Jim.

"Jimothy," he said.

Jim returned his gaze, steady and level, saying nothing. It was the first time they had been together in the same room since Renwick's, Eddie thought, and then Jim had been half-dead from fighting and covered in blood. It was easier now to mark both the differences and the similarities between the two men: Jim in his ragged flannel and jeans, and Pennywise in his beautiful and expensive-looking suit; Jim with a day's worth of stubble and gray in his hair, and Pennywise looking much as he had when he was twenty-five—only colder, somehow, and harder, as if the passing years were in the process of turning him slowly to stone.

"I hear the Clave has brought you onto the Council now," Pennywise said. "It would only be fitting for a Clave diluted by corruption and pandering to find itself infiltrated by half-breed degenerates." His voice was placid, even cheerful—so much so that it was hard to feel the poison in his words, or to really believe that he meant them. His

gaze moved back to Eddie. “Edward,” he said, “here with the vampire, I see. When things have settled a bit, we really must discuss your choice of pets.”

A low growling noise came from Stan’s throat. Eddie gripped his hand, hard—hard enough that there would have been a time he’d have jerked away in pain. Now he didn’t seem to feel it. “Don’t,” Eddie whispered. “Just don’t.”

Pennywise had already turned his attention away from them. He climbed the dais steps and turned to gaze down at the crowd. “So many familiar faces,” he observed. “Neil. Malachi. Amatis.”

Amatis stood rigid, her eyes bright with hatred.

The Inquisitor was still struggling in Malachi’s grasp. Pennywise’s gaze flicked over him, half-amused. “Even you, Brenner. I hear you were indirectly responsible for the death of my old friend Norbert Keene. A pity, that.”

Jim found his voice. “You admit it, then,” he said. “You brought the wards down. You sent the demons.”

“I sent them,” said Pennywise. “I can send more. Surely the Clave—even the Clave, stupid as they are—must have expected this? You expected it, didn’t you, Jimothy?”

Jim’s eyes were gravely blue. “I did. But I know you, Robert. So have you come to bargain, or to gloat?”

“Neither.” Pennywise regarded the silent crowd. “I have no need to bargain,” he said, and though his tone was calm, his voice carried as if amplified. “And no desire to gloat. I don’t *enjoy* causing the deaths of Shadowhunters; there are precious few of us already, in a world that needs us desperately. But that’s how the Clave likes it, isn’t it? It’s just another one of their nonsensical rules, the rules they use to grind ordinary Shadowhunters into the dust. I did what I did because I had to. I did what I did because it was the only way to make the Clave listen. Shadowhunters didn’t die because of me; they died because the Clave ignored me,” He met Brenner’s eyes across the crowd; the Inquisitor’s face was white and twitching. “So many of

you here were once in my Circle,” said Pennywise slowly. “I speak to you now, and to those who knew of the Circle but stood outside it. Do you remember what I predicted fifteen years ago? That unless we acted against the Accords, the city of Alicante, our own precious capital, would be overrun by slobbering, slaving crowds of half-breeds, the degenerate races trampling underfoot everything we hold dear? And just as I predicted, all that has come to pass. The Gard burned to the ground, the Portal destroyed, our streets awash with monsters. Half-human scum presuming to lead us. So, my friends, my enemies, my brothers under the Angel, I ask you—do you believe me now?” His voice rose to a shout. “DO YOU BELIEVE ME NOW?”

His gaze swept the room as if he expected an answer. There was none—only a sea of staring faces.

“Robert.” Jim’s voice, though soft, broke the silence. “Can’t you see what you’ve done? The Accords you dreaded so much didn’t make Downworlders equal to Nephilim. They didn’t assure half humans a spot on the Council. All the old hatreds were still in place. You should have trusted to those, but you didn’t—you couldn’t—and now you’ve given us the one thing that could possibly have united us all.” His eyes sought Pennywise’s. “A common enemy.”

A flush passed over Pennywise’s pale face. “I am not an enemy. Not of Nephilim. *You* are that. You’re the one trying to entice them into a hopeless fight. You think those demons you saw are all I have? They were a fraction of what I can summon.”

“There are more of us as well,” said Jim. “More Nephilim, and more Downworlders.”

“Downworlders,” Pennywise sneered. “They will run at the first sign of true danger. Nephilim are born to be warriors, to protect this world, but the world hates your kind. There is a reason clean silver burns you, and daylight scorches the Night Children.”

“It doesn’t scorch me,” Stan said in a hard, clear voice, despite the grip of Eddie’s hand. “Here I am, standing in sunlight—”

But Pennywise just laughed. “I’ve seen you choke on the name of God, vampire,” he said. “As for why you can stand in the sunlight—”

He broke off and grinned. "You're an anomaly, perhaps. A freak. But still a monster."

A monster. Eddie thought of Pennywise on the ship, of what he had said there: *Your mother told me that I had turned her first child into a monster. She left me before I could do the same to her second.*

Ben. The thought of his name was a sharp pain. *After what Pennywise did, he stands here talking about monsters—*

"The only monster here," Eddie said, despite himself and despite his resolution to keep silent, "is you. I saw Ithuriel," he went on when Pennywise turned to look at him in surprise. "I know everything—"

"I doubt that," Pennywise said. "If you did, you'd keep your mouth shut. For your brother's sake, if not your own."

Don't you even talk about Ben to me! Eddie wanted to shout, but another voice came to cut his off, a cool, unexpected female voice, fearless and bitter.

"And what about *my* brother?" Amatis moved to stand at the foot of the dais, looking up at Pennywise. Jim started in surprise and shook his head at her, but she ignored him.

Pennywise frowned. "What about Jimothy?" Amatis's question, Eddie sensed, had unsettled him, or maybe it was just that Amatis was there, asking, confronting him. He had written her off years ago as weak, unlikely to challenge him. Pennywise never liked it when people surprised him.

"You told me he wasn't my brother anymore," said Amatis. "You took Will away from me. You destroyed my family. You say you aren't an enemy of Nephilim, but you set each of us against each other, family against family, wrecking lives without compunction. You say you hate the Clave, but you're the one who made them what they are now—petty and paranoid. We used to trust one another, we Nephilim. You changed that. I will never forgive you for it." Her voice shook. "Or for making me treat Jimothy as if he were no longer my brother. I won't forgive you for that, either. Nor will I forgive myself for listening to you."

“Amatis—” Jim took a step forward, but his sister put up a hand to stop him. Her eyes were shining with tears, but her back was straight, her voice firm and unwavering.

“There was a time we were all willing to listen to you, Robert,” she said. “And we all have that on our conscience. But no more. No more. That time is over. Is there anyone here who disagrees with me?”

Eddie jerked his head up and looked out at the gathered Shadowhunters: They looked to him like a rough sketch of a crowd, with white blurs for faces. He saw Neil Mayfield, his jaw set; and the Inquisitor, who was shaking like a frail tree in a high wind. And Malachi, whose dark, polished face was strangely unreadable.

No one said a word.

If Eddie had expected Pennywise to be angry at this lack of response from the Nephilim he had hoped to lead, he was disappointed. Other than a twitch in the muscle of his jaw, he was expressionless. As if he had expected this response. As if he had planned for it.

“Very well,” he said. “If you will not listen to reason, you will have to listen to force. I have already showed you I can take down the wards around your city. I see that you’ve put them back up, but that’s of no consequence; I can easily do it again. You will either accede to my requirements or face every demon the Mortal Sword can summon. I will tell them not to spare a single one of you, not a man, woman, or child. It’s your choice.”

A murmur swept around the room; Jim was staring. “You would deliberately destroy your own kind, Robert?”

“Sometimes diseased plants must be culled to preserve the whole garden,” said Pennywise. “And if all are diseased ...” He turned to face the horrified crowd. “It is your choice,” he went on. “I have the Mortal Cup. If I must, I will start over with a new world of Shadowhunters, created and taught by me. But I can give you this one chance. If the Clave will sign over all the powers of the Council to me and accept my unequivocal sovereignty and rule, I will stay my hand. All Shadowhunters will swear an oath of obedience and accept a permanent loyalty rune that binds them to me. These are my

terms.”

There was silence. Amatis had her hand over her mouth; the rest of the room swung before Eddie’s eyes in a whirling blur. *They can’t give in to him*, he thought. *They can’t*. But what choice did they have? What choice did any of them ever have? *They are trapped by Pennywise*, he thought dully, *as surely as Ben and I are trapped by what he made us. We are all chained to him by our own blood.*

It was only a moment, though it felt like an hour to Eddie, before a thin voice cut through the silence—the high, spidery voice of the Inquisitor. “Sovereignty and rule?” he shrieked. “*Your* rule?”

“Brenner—” The Consul moved to restrain him, but the Inquisitor was too quick. He wriggled free and darted toward the dais. He was yelping something, the same words over and over, as if he’d lost his mind entirely, his eyes rolled back practically to the whites. He thrust Amatis aside, staggering up the steps of the dais to face Pennywise. “I am the Inquisitor, do you understand, the *Inquisitor!*” he shouted. “I am part of the Clave! The *Council!* I make the rules, not you! I rule, not you! I won’t let you do this, you upstart, demon-loving slime—”

With a look very close to boredom, Pennywise reached out a hand, almost as if he meant to touch the Inquisitor on the shoulder. But Pennywise couldn’t touch anything—he was just a Projection—then Eddie gasped as Pennywise’s hand passed through the Inquisitor’s skin, bones and flesh, vanishing into his rib cage. There was a second—only a second—during which the whole Hall seemed to gape at Pennywise’s left arm, buried somehow, impossibly, wrist-deep in Brenner’s chest. Then Pennywise jerked his wrist hard and suddenly to the left—a twisting motion, as if he were turning a stubbornly rusty doorknob.

The Inquisitor gave a single cry and dropped like a stone.

Pennywise drew his hand back. It was slicked with blood, a scarlet glove reaching halfway to his elbow, staining the expensive wool of his suit. Lowering his bloody hand, he gazed out across the horrified crowd, his eyes coming to rest at last on Jim. He spoke slowly. “I will give you until tomorrow at midnight to consider my terms. At that time I will bring my army, in all its force, to Brocelind Plain. If I have

not yet received a message of surrender from the Clave, I will march with my army here to Alicante, and this time we will leave nothing living. You have that long to consider my terms. Use the time wisely.”

And with that, he vanished.

Notes for the Chapter:

Next chapter will be full Reddie and Benverly just sayin : "v

21. Stay With Me

Notes for the Chapter:

Disclaimer: Lots of Reddie and Benverly. I do not take responsibilities for upcoming heart attacks. I'm just being extra idk. LOL. Again, ignore me please.

“Well, how about that,” said Richie, still without looking at Eddie—he hadn’t really looked at him since Eddie and Stan and Beverly had arrived on the front step of the house the Denbroughs were now inhabiting. Instead he was leaning against one of the high windows in the living room, staring out toward the rapidly darkening sky. “A guy attends the funeral of his nine-year-old brother and misses all the fun.”

“Richie,” Bill said, in a tired sort of voice. “Don’t.”

Bill was slumped in one of the worn, overstuffed chairs that were the only things to sit on in the room. The house had the odd, alien feel of houses belonging to strangers: It was decorated in floral-printed fabrics, frilly and pastel, and everything in it was slightly worn or tattered. There was a glass bowl filled with chocolates on the small end table near Bill, Eddie, starving, had eaten a few and found them crumbly and dry. He wondered what kind of people had lived here. The kind who ran away when things got tough, he thought sourly; they deserved to have their house taken over.

“Don’t *what?*” Richie asked; it was dark enough outside now that Eddie could see his face reflected in the window glass. His eyes looked black. He was wearing Shadowhunter mourning clothes—they didn’t wear black to funerals, since black was the color of gear and fighting. The color of death was white, and the white jacket Richie wore had scarlet runes woven into the material around the collar and wrists. Unlike battle runes, which were all about aggression and protection, these spoke a gentler language of healing and grief. There were bands of hammered metal around his wrists, too, with similar runes on them. Bill was dressed the same way, all in white with the same red-gold runes traced over the material. It made his hair look

very dark.

Richie, Eddie thought, on the other hand, all in white, looked like an angel. Albeit one of the avenging kind.

“You’re n-not mad at Eddie. Or the others,” Bill said. “At least,” he added, with a faint, worried frown, “I *don’t* think you’re mad at Stan.”

Eddie half-expected Richie to snap an angry retort, but all he said was, “Eddie knows I’m not angry at him.”

Beverly, leaning her elbows on the back of the sofa, rolled her eyes but said only, “What I don’t get is how Pennywise managed to kill the Inquisitor. I thought Projections couldn’t actually affect anything.”

“They s-shouldn’t be able to,” said Bill. “They’re just illusions. So much colored air, so to speak.”

“Well, not in this case. He reached into the Inquisitor and he *twisted*...” Eddie shuddered. “There was a lot of blood.”

“Like a special bonus for you,” Richie said to Stan.

Stan ignored this. “Has there ever been an Inquisitor who didn’t die a horrible death?” he wondered aloud. “It’s like being the drummer in Spinal Tap.”

Bill rubbed a hand across his face. “I can’t believe my parents don’t know about this yet,” he said. “I c-can’t say I’m looking forward to telling them.”

“Where are your parents?” asked Eddie. “I thought they were upstairs.”

Bill shook his head. “They’re still at the necropolis. At Georgie’s grave. They sent us back. They wanted to be there alone for a while.”

“What about Ben?” Beverly asked. “Where is he?”

The humor, such as it was, left Richie’s expression. “He won’t come out out of his room,” he said. “He thinks what happened to Georgie

was his fault. He won't even come to the funeral.”

“Have you tried talking to him?”

“No,” Richie said, “we’ve been punching him repeatedly in the face instead. Why, do you think that won’t work?”

“Just thought I’d ask.” Beverly's tone was mild.

“We’ll tell him this stuff about Henry not actually b-being Henry,” said Bill. “It might make him feel better. He thinks he ought to have been able to tell that there was something off about Henry, but if he w-was a spy ...” Bill shrugged. “Nobody noticed anything off about him. Not even the Mayfields.”

“I thought he was a knob,” Richie pointed out.

“Yes, but that’s just because—” Bill sank deeper into his chair. He looked exhausted, his skin a pale gray color against the stark white of his clothes. “It h-hardly matters. Once he finds out what his father is threatening, n-nothing’s going to cheer him up.”

“But would Pennywise really do it?” Eddie asked. “Send a demon army against Nephilim—I mean, he’s still a *Shadowhunter*, isn’t he? He couldn’t destroy all his own people.”

“He didn’t care enough about his children not to destroy them,” Richie said, meeting his eyes across the room. Their gazes held. “What makes you think he’d care about his people?”

Bill looked from one of them to the other, and Eddie could tell from his expression that Richie hadn’t told him about Ithuriel yet. He looked baffled, and very sad.

“This does explain one thing,” Richie said without looking at Bill. “Eleven was trying to see if she could use a tracking rune on any of the things Henry had left in his room, to see if we could locate him that way. She said she wasn’t getting much of a reading on anything we gave him. Just... flat.”

“What does that mean?”

“They were Henry Bowers's things. The fake Henry probably took them whenever he intercepted him. And Eleven isn't getting anything from them because the real Henry—”

“Is probably dead,” finished Bill. “And the Henry we know is too smart to leave anything b-behind that could be used to track him. I mean, you can't track somebody from just anything. It h-has to be an object that's in some way very connected to that person. A family heirloom, or a stele, or a b-brush with some hair in it, something like that.”

“Which is too bad,” said Richie, “because if we could follow him, he'd probably lead us straight to Pennywise. I'm sure he's scuttled right back to his master with a full report. Probably told him all about Keene's crackpot mirror-lake theory.”

“It might not have been crackpot,” Bill said. “T-they've stationed guards at the paths that go to the lake, and set up wards that will warn them if anyone Portals there.”

“Fantastic. I'm sure we all feel very safe now.” Richie leaned back against the wall.

“What I don't get,” Stan said.“ is why Henry stayed around. After what he did to Ben and Georgie, he was going to get caught; there was no more pretending. I mean, even if he thought he'd killed Ben instead of just knocking him out, how was he going to explain that they were both dead and he was still fine? No, he was busted. So why hang around through the fighting? Why come up to the Gard to get me? I'm pretty sure he didn't actually care one way or the other whether I lived or died.”

“Now you're being too hard on him,” Richie said. “I'm sure he'd rather you'd died.”

“Actually,” Eddie said, “I think he stayed because of me.”

Richie's gaze flicked up to his with a flash of gold. “Because of you? Hoping for another hot date, was he?”

Eddie felt himself flush. “No. And our date wasn't hot. In fact, it

wasn't even a date. Anyway, that's not the point. When he came into the Hall, he kept trying to get me to go outside with him so we could talk. He wanted something from me. I just don't know what."

"Or maybe he just wanted you," Richie said. Seeing Eddie's expression, he added, "Not that way. I mean maybe he wanted to bring you to Pennywise."

"Pennywise doesn't care about me," Eddie said.

Something flickered in the depths of Richie's eyes. "Is that what you call it?" His expression was frighteningly bleak. "After what happened on the boat, he's interested in *you*. Which means you need to be careful. Very careful. In fact, it wouldn't hurt if you just spent the next few days inside. You can lock yourself in your room like Ben."

"I'm not going to do that."

"Of course you're not," said Richie, "because you live to torture me, don't you?"

"Not everything, Richie, is about you," Eddie said furiously.

"Possibly," Richie said, "but you have to admit that the majority of things are."

Eddie resisted the urge to scream.

Beverly cleared her throat. "Speaking of Ben—which we only sort of were, but I thought I ought to mention this before the arguing really got under way—I think maybe I should go talk to him."

"You?" Bill said. And then, looking faintly embarrassed by his own discomfiture, added quickly, "It's just—he won't even come out of his room for his own family. Why would he come out for you?"

"Maybe because I'm *not* family," Beverly said. She was standing with her hands in her pockets, her shoulders back. Her encounters with the Shadowhunters' world had changed her, and not just the surface of her; the change went deeper than that. She stood straight, with her head up, and took whatever Richie and Bill threw at her and didn't

seem to care. The Beverly who would have been frightened of them, or made uneasy by them, was gone.

Eddie felt a sudden pain in his heart, and realized with a jolt what it was. He was missing her—missing Beverly. Beverly as she had been.

“I think I’ll have a try at getting Ben to talk to me,” said Beverly. “It can’t hurt.”

“But it’s almost dark,” Eddie said. “We told Jim and Amatis we’d be back before the sun went down.”

“I’ll walk you back,” Richie said. “As for Beverly, she can manage her own way back in the dark—can’t you, Beverly?”

“O-of course she can,” Bill said indignantly, as if eager to make up for his earlier slighting of Beverly. “She’s a witch—and,” he added, “I just now realized you were probably joking. Never m-mind me.”

“And what about me?” Stan protested. “Are you guys going to leave me here?”

Richie raised an eyebrow. “Do you really want to go with *us*, vampire?”

Stan sighed. “I’m outta here,” he said, before disappearing through the doorway. Vampire speed was something Eddie had to get used to.

Beverly smiled. Eddie opened his mouth to protest again—and closed it. Partly because he was, he knew, being unreasonable. And partly because there was a look on Richie’s face as he gazed past him, at Beverly, a look that startled him into silence: It was amusement, Eddie thought, mixed with gratitude and maybe even—most surprising of all—a little bit of respect.

It was a short walk between the Denbroughs’ new house and Amatis’s; Eddie wished it were longer. He couldn’t shake the feeling that every moment he spent with Richie was somehow precious and limited, that they were closing in on some half-invisible deadline that would separate them forever.

Eddie looked sideways at him. Richie was staring straight ahead, almost as if he weren't there. The line of his profile was sharp and clear-edged in the witchlight that illuminated the streets. His hair curled against his cheek, not quite hiding the white scar on one temple where a Mark had been. Eddie could see a line of metal glittering at his throat, where the Tozier ring dangled on its chain. His left hand was bare; his knuckles looked raw. So he really was healing like a mundane, as Bill had asked him to.

Eddie shivered. Richie glanced at him. "Are you cold?"

"I was just thinking," he said. "I'm surprised that Pennywise went after the Inquisitor instead of Jim. The Inquisitor's a Shadowhunter, and Jim—Jim's a Downworlder. Plus, Pennywise hates him."

"But in a way, he respects him, even if he is a Downworlder," Richie said, and Eddie thought of the look Richie had given Beverly earlier, and then tried not to think of it. "Jim is trying to get the Clave to change, to think in a new way. That's exactly what Pennywise did, even if his goals were—well, not the same. Jim's an iconoclast. He wants change. To Pennywise, the Inquisitor represents the old, hidebound Clave he hates so much."

"And they were friends once," Eddie said. "Jim and Pennywise."

"The Marks of that which once hath been," Richie said, and Eddie could tell he was quoting something, from the half-mocking tone in his voice. "Unfortunately, you never really hate anyone as much as someone you cared about once. I imagine Pennywise has something special planned for Jim, down the road, after he takes over."

"But he won't take over," said Eddie, and when Richie said nothing, his voice rose. "He won't win—he can't. He doesn't really want war, not against Shadowhunters and Downworlders—"

"What makes you think Shadowhunters will fight with Downworlders?" Richie said, and he still wasn't looking at him. They were walking along the canal street, and he was looking out at the water, his jaw set. "Just because Jim says so? Jim's an idealist."

"And why is that a bad thing to be?"

"It's not. I'm just not one," said Richie, and Eddie felt a cold pang in his heart at the emptiness in his voice. Despair, anger, hate.

They had reached Amatis's house; Eddie stopped at the foot of the steps, turning to face him. "Maybe," he said. "But you're not like him, either."

Richie started a little at that, or maybe it was just the firmness in Eddie's tone. He turned his head to look at him for what felt like the first time since they'd left the Denbroughs'. "Eddie—" he began, and broke off, with an intake of breath. "There's blood on your sleeve. Are you hurt?"

He moved toward Eddie, taking his wrist in his hand. Eddie glanced down and saw to his surprise that he was right—there was an irregular scarlet stain on the right sleeve of his coat. What was odd was that it was still bright red. Shouldn't dried blood be a darker color? He frowned. "That's not my blood."

Richie relaxed slightly, his grip loosening. "Is it the Inquisitor's?"

Eddie shook his head. "I actually think it's Henry's."

"Henry's blood?"

"Yes—when he came into the Hall the other night, remember, his face was bleeding. I think Ben must have clawed him, but anyway—I touched his face and got his blood on me." Eddie looked more closely at it. "I thought Amatis washed the coat, but I guess she didn't."

He expected Richie to let go of him then, but instead he held his wrist for a long moment, examining the blood, before returning Eddie's arm to him, apparently satisfied. "Thanks."

Eddie stared at him for a moment before shaking his head. "You're not going to tell me what that was about, are you?"

"Not a chance."

He threw his arms up in exasperation. "I'm going inside. I'll see you later."

Eddie turned and headed up the steps to Amatis's front door. There was no way he could have known that the moment he turned his back, the smile vanished from Richie's face, or that he stood for a long time in the darkness once the door closed behind him, looking after him, and twisting a small piece of thread over and over between his fingers.

"Ben," Beverly said. It had taken her a few tries to find his door, but the scream of "Go away!" that had emanated from behind this one convinced her she'd made the right choice. "Ben, let me in."

There was a muffled thump and the door reverberated slightly, as if Ben had thrown something at it. Possibly a shoe. "I don't want to talk to you and Eddie. I don't want to talk to anyone. Leave me alone, Beverly."

"Eddie's not here," said Beverly. "And I'm not going away until you talk to me."

"Bill!" Ben yelled. "Richie! Make her go away!"

Beverly waited. There was no sound from downstairs. Either Bill had left or he was lying low. "They're not here, Ben. It's just me."

There was a silence. Finally Ben spoke again. This time his voice came from much nearer, as if he was standing just on the other side of the door. "You're alone?"

"I'm alone," Beverly said.

The door cracked open. Ben was standing there wearing a black boxers and nothing else. Beverly had never seen him like this: barefoot, with his hair unbrushed, and no emotion in his face. "You can come in."

She stepped past him into the room. In the light from the door she could see that it looked, as her mother would have said, like a tornado had hit it. Clothes were scattered across the floor in piles, a duffel bag open on the floor as if it had exploded. Ben's bright silver-gold whip hung from one bedpost, a white trouser from another.

Beverly averted her eyes.

The curtains were drawn, the lamps extinguished. Ben flopped down on the edge of the bed and looked at her with bitter amusement. "I never thought a girl would be blushing because of me." He raised his chin. "So, I let you in. What do you want?"

Despite his angry glare, Beverly thought he looked younger than usual, his eyes huge and black in his pinched white face. She could see the white scars that traced his light skin, all over his bare arms, his back and collarbones, even his legs. *If Eddie remains a Shadowhunter, she thought, one day he'll look like this, scarred all over.* The thought didn't upset her as once it might have done. There was something about the way Ben wore his scars, as if he was proud of them.

He had something in his hands, something he was turning over and over between his fingers. It was a small something that glinted dully in the half-light.

"What happened to Georgie," Beverly said. "It wasn't your fault."

He didn't look at her. He was staring down at the object in his hands. "Do you know what this is?" he said, and held it up. It seemed to be a small toy soldier, carved out of wood. A toy Shadowhunter, Beverly realized, complete with painted-on black gear. The silver glint she'd noticed was the paint on the little sword it held; it was nearly worn away. "It was Richie's," he said, without waiting for her to answer. "It was the only toy he had when he came from Derry. I don't know, maybe it was part of a bigger set once. I think he made it himself, but he never said much about it. He used to take it everywhere with him when he was little, always in a pocket or whatever. Then one day I noticed Georgie carrying it around. Richie must have been around thirteen then. He just gave it to Georgie, I guess, when he got too old for it. Anyway, it was in Georgie's hand when they found him. It was like he grabbed it to hold on to when Henry—when he—" He broke off. The effort he was making not to cry was visible; his mouth was set in a grimace, as if it were twisting itself out of shape. "I should have been there protecting him. I should have been there for him to hold on to, not some stupid little wooden toy." He flung it down onto the bed, his eyes shining.

"You were unconscious," Beverly protested. "You nearly died, Ben. There was nothing you could have done."

Ben shook his head. He looked fierce and wild. "What do you know about it?" he demanded. "Did you know that Georgie came to us the night he died and told us he'd seen someone climbing the demon towers, and I told him he was dreaming and sent him away? And he was right. I bet it was that bastard Henry, climbing the tower so he could take the wards down. And Henry killed him so he couldn't tell anyone what he'd seen. If I'd just listened—just taken one second to listen—it wouldn't have happened."

"There's no way you could have known," Beverly said. "And about Henry—he wasn't really the Mayfields' cousin. He had everyone fooled."

Ben didn't look surprised. "I know," he said. "I heard you talking to Bill and Richie. I was listening from the top of the stairs."

"You were eavesdropping?"

He shrugged. "Up to the part where you said you were going to come and talk to me. Then I came back here. I didn't feel like seeing you." He looked at her sideways. "I'll give you this much, though: You're persistent."

She looked at Ben; they were very close together, facing each other. His profile in the gray light was cold and clean; only his mouth had any softness.

Ben broke off, looking at her, and she wondered if she looked the way she felt—stunned and breathless. "What do you want from me, Beverly?"

Her voice shook when she spoke. "I—I want to understand you."

He looked up at her, through his lashes. "Is that really necessary?"

"I don't know," Beverly said. "I'm not sure anyone *does* understand you, except possibly Bill."

"Bill doesn't understand me," Ben said. "He cares for me—like a

brother might. It's not the same thing."

"Don't you *want* him to understand you?"

"Dear God, no," he said. "Why should he need to know my reasons for living my life as I do?"

"Maybe," Beverly said, "he simply wants to know that there is a reason."

"Does it matter?" Ben asked softly. The chilly air of the room struck the skin of her body with a shock, and a shiver passed over Beverly's entire body, as if she had found herself suddenly naked in the cold. "Do reasons matter when there's nothing that can be done to change things?"

Beverly reached for an answer, and found none. She was shivering, almost too hard to speak.

"Are you cold?" Lacing his fingers with hers, Ben took her hand and pressed it to his cheek. She was startled by the feverish heat of his skin. "Bev," he said, his voice thick and soft with desire, and she leaned toward him, swaying like a tree whose branches were weighted by snow. Her whole body ached; she ached, as if there were a terrible hollow emptiness inside her. She was more conscious of Ben than she had ever been of anything or anyone else in her life, of the faint shine of brown beneath his half-closed lids, of the shadow of light stubble across his jaw where he hadn't shaved, of faint white scars that dotted the skin of his shoulders and throat—and more than anything else of his mouth, the crescent shape of it, the slight dent in the center of his bottom lip. When he leaned toward her and brushed his lips across hers, she reached for him as if she would otherwise drown.

For a moment their mouths pressed hotly together, Ben's free hand tangling in her hair. Beverly gasped when his arms went around her. She put her hands lightly around his neck; his skin was burning hot to the touch. She could feel the muscles of his shoulders, hard and smooth. A part of Beverly shouted at her, telling her not to do this, that he wasn't in the right state of mind. But there was also a part of her that wanted this, even when she didn't understand her own

feelings. And then, without warning, he ripped his hands from her and pushed hard against her shoulders, shoving her away from him with such force that she nearly fell backward, and only stopped herself awkwardly, her hands braced on the floor behind her.

She sat, staring at him in amazement. Ben was on his knees, his chest hitching up and down as if he had been running incredibly fast and far. He was pale, except for two fever splotches of red across his cheeks. "God in Heaven," he whispered. "What was that?"

Beverly felt her cheeks turn scarlet. Wasn't Ben the one who was supposed to know exactly what *that* was, and wasn't *she* the one who was supposed to have pushed him away?

"I can't." His hands were fists at his sides; she could see them trembling. "Beverly, I think you should go."

"Go?" Her mind whirled; she felt as if she had been in a warm, safe place and without warning had been cast out into a freezing, empty darkness. "I ... I should not have been so forward. I'm sorry—"

A look of intense pain flashed across his face. "God. Beverly." The words seemed dragged out of him. "I'm so sorry. I can't right now."

"No. I'm so stupid," Beverly mumbled. "This shouldn't have happened."

"Don't say that. You're not stupid."

She rose to her feet, then looked at Ben. His eyes were fixed on the floor. And she saw with a mixture of amazement and pain that the lines of tension went out of his shoulders. Was it that much of a horror having her there, and that much of a relief that she was leaving?

And as she was ready to leave, she heard Ben's voice behind her. Broken, discouraged, lost. "Can you..." he said weakly. "Can you stay until I fall asleep? I don't want to be alone."

"Ben," Beverly took a step forward. She was oddly, suddenly conscious of the fact that he was shirtless, so she held back from putting a hand on his shoulder or doing anything else overtly

soothing. "Do you think that would make you feel any better?"

Ben didn't answer, instead, he went over the bed and lay down. Moving to one side, leaving a big space for Beverly.

Beverly approached him, his eyes were already closed as she lay in bed with him, hearing the sound of his deep breathing, she turned to her right to watch Ben, dried tears were visible around his cheeks.

Ben fell asleep moments after that, but Beverly didn't, she couldn't. She rolled over, burying her face in the pillow. For so many years she had wondered what her first kiss would be like—if he would be handsome, if he would love her, if he would be kind. She had never imagined that the kiss would be so brief and desperate and wild. Or that it would taste of tears, tears and blood.

Eddie lay awake in bed, staring up at a single patch of moonlight as it made its way across the ceiling. His nerves were still too jangled from the events of the day for him to sleep, and it didn't help that Beverly hadn't come back before dinner—or after it. Eventually he'd voiced his concern to Jim, who'd thrown on a coat and headed over to the city. He'd returned looking amused. "She's fine, Eddie," he said. "Go to bed." And then he'd left again, with Amatis, off to another one of their interminable meetings at the Accords Hall. Eddie wondered if anyone had cleaned up the Inquisitor's blood yet.

With nothing else to do, he'd gone to bed, but sleep had remained stubbornly out of reach. Stan was asleep in Will's old room, and Eddie could hear his snores from there. He kept seeing Pennywise in his head, reaching into the Inquisitor and ripping his heart out. The way he had turned to him and said, *You'd keep your mouth shut. For your brother's sake, if not your own.* Above all, the secrets he had learned from Ithuriel lay like a weight on his chest. Under all these anxieties was the fear, constant as a heartbeat, that his mother would die. Where was Eleven?

There was a rustling sound by the curtains, and a sudden wash of moonlight poured into the room. Eddie sat bolt upright, scrabbling for the seraph blade he kept on his bedside table.

"It's all right." A hand came down on his—a slender, scarred, familiar hand. "It's me."

Eddie drew his breath in sharply, and he took his hand back. "Richie," he said. "What are you doing here? What's wrong?"

Richie was standing by the head of the bed, still wearing his white mourning clothes, and there was nothing light or sarcastic or distant in the way he was looking down at Eddie. He was very pale, and his eyes looked haunted and nearly black with strain. "Are you all right?"

"I don't know," he said in the dazed manner of someone just waking up from a dream. "I wasn't going to come here. I've been wandering around all night—I couldn't sleep—and I kept finding myself walking here. To you."

Eddie sat up straighter, letting the bedclothes fall down around his hips. "Why can't you sleep? Did something happen?" he asked, and immediately felt stupid. What *hadn't* happened?

Richie, however, barely seemed to hear the question. "I had to see you," he said, mostly to himself. "I know I shouldn't. But I had to."

"I didn't say nothing happened." He sat down on the bed, facing Eddie. He was close enough that Eddie could have just leaned forward and kissed him—

Eddie's chest tightened. "Is there bad news? Is everything—is everyone—"

"It's not bad," said Richie, "and it's not news. It's the opposite of news. It's something I've always known, and you—you probably know it too. God knows I haven't hid it all that well." His eyes searched Eddie's face, slowly, as if he meant to memorize it. "What happened," he said, and hesitated, "is that I realized something."

"Richie," he whispered suddenly, and for no reason he could identify, he was frightened of what he was about to say. "Richie, you don't have to—"

"I was trying to go ... somewhere," Richie said. "But I kept getting

pulled back here. I couldn't stop walking, couldn't stop thinking. About the first time I ever saw you, and how after that I couldn't forget you. I wanted to, but I couldn't stop myself. I forced Keene to let me be the one who came to find you and bring you back to the Institute. And even back then, in that stupid coffee shop, when I saw you sitting on that couch with Stan and Beverly, even then that felt wrong to me— *I* should have been the one sitting with you. The one who made you laugh like that. I couldn't get rid of that feeling. That it should have been me. And the more I knew you, the more I felt it—it had never been like that for me before. I'd always wanted a someone and then gotten to know them and not wanted them anymore, but with you the feeling just got stronger and stronger until that night when we kissed the night of your birthday and I *knew*."

Eddie wanted to say something, anything, but the words were stuck in his mouth.

"I love you, Eddie. And I will love you until I die, and if there's a life after that, I'll love you then."

Eddie caught his breath. He had said it—the words there was no going back from. Eddie struggled for a reply, but none came.

Richie stood up then, with a sort of violent suddenness, and crossed the room to the window. He looked lost, as lost as he had in the Great Hall standing over Georgie's body.

"Richie?" Eddie said, alarmed, and when he didn't answer, Eddie scrambled to his feet and went to him, laying his hand on his arm. He continued staring out the window; their reflections in the glass were nearly transparent—ghostly outlines of a tall boy and a smaller one, his hand clamped anxiously on his sleeve. "What's wrong?"

"I shouldn't have told you like that," he said, not looking at Eddie. "I'm sorry. That was probably a lot to take in. You looked so ... shocked."

The tension underlying his voice was a live wire. "I was," Eddie said. "I've spent the past few days wondering if you hated me. And then I saw you tonight and I was pretty sure you did."

"Hated you?" he echoed, looking bewildered. He reached out then and touched Eddie's face, lightly, just the tips of his fingers against his skin. "I told you I couldn't sleep. Tomorrow by midnight we'll be either at war or under Pennywise's rule. This could be the last night of our lives, certainly the last even barely ordinary one. The last night we go to sleep and get up just as we always have. And all I could think of was that I wanted to spend it with you."

His heart skipped a beat. "Richie—"

"I don't mean it like that," he said. "I won't touch you, not if you don't want me to. I just want to lie down with you and wake up with you, just once, just once ever in my life." There was desperation in his voice. "It's just this one night. In the grand scheme of things, how much can one night matter?"

Because think how we'll feel in the morning. Think how much worse it will be pretending that we don't mean anything to each other in front of everyone else after we've spent the night together, even if all we do is sleep. It's like having just a little bit of a drug—it only makes you want more..

"Close the curtains, then, before you come to bed," Eddie said. "I can't sleep with this much light in the room."

The look that washed over his face was pure incredulity. He really hadn't expected him to say yes, Eddie realized in surprise, and a moment later he had caught him and hugged him, his face buried in Eddie's still-messy-from-sleep hair. "Eddie..."

"Come to bed," he said softly. "It's late." Eddie drew away from him and returned to the bed, crawling up onto it and drawing the covers up to his waist.

Somehow, looking at him like this, Eddie could almost imagine that things were different, that it was many years from now and they'd been together so long that they'd done this a hundred times, that every night belonged to them, and not just this one. Eddie propped his chin on his hands and watched Richie as he reached to jerk the curtains shut and then unzipped his white jacket and hung it over the back of a chair. He was wearing a pale gray T-shirt underneath, and

the Marks that twined his bare arms shone darkly as he unbuckled his weapons belt and laid it on the floor. He unlaced his boots and stepped out of them as he came toward the bed, and he stretched out very carefully beside Eddie. Lying on his back, Richie turned his head to look at him. A very little light filtered into the room past the edge of the curtains, just enough for Eddie to see the outline of his face and the bright gleam of his eyes.

“Good night, Eds,” he said.

His hands lay flat on either side of him, his arms at his sides. He seemed barely to be breathing; Eddie wasn't sure he was breathing himself. He slid his own hand across the bedsheet, just far enough that their fingers touched—so lightly that he would probably hardly have been aware of it had he been touching anyone but Richie, as it was, the nerve endings in his fingertips prickled softly, as if he were holding them over a low flame. Eddie felt him tense beside him and then relax. He had shut his eyes, and his lashes cast fine shadows against the curve of his cheekbones. His mouth curled into a smile as if he sensed Eddie watching him, and Eddie wondered how he would look in the morning, with his hair messed and sleep circles under his eyes. Despite everything, the thought gave him a jolt of happiness.

Eddie laced their fingers together. “Good night,” he whispered, and his hand clasped in Richie's as if they were children in a fairy tale, he fell asleep beside him in the dark.

22. Familia Ante Omnia

Jim had spent most of the night watching the moon's progress across the translucent roof of the Hall of Accords like a silver coin rolling across the clear surface of a glass table. When the moon was close to full, as it was right now, he felt a corresponding sharpening in his vision and sense of smell, even when he was in human form. Now, for instance, he could smell the sweat of doubt in the room, and the underlying sharp tang of fear. He could sense the restless worry of his pack of wolves out in Brocelind Forest as they paced the darkness beneath the trees and waited for news from him.

"Jimothy." Amatis's voice in his ear was low but piercing. "Jimothy!"

Snapped out of his reverie, Jim fought to focus his exhausted eyes on the scene in front of him. It was a ragged little group, those who had agreed to at least listen to his plan. Fewer than he had hoped for. Many he knew from his old life in Derry—the Mayfields, the Denbroughs, the Hollands—and just as many he had just met, like the Monteverdes, who ran the Lisbon Institute and spoke in a mixture of Portuguese and English; or Nasreen Chaudhury, the stern-featured head of the Mumbai Institute. Her dark green sari was patterned in elaborate runes of such a bright silver that Jim instinctively flinched when she passed too close.

"Really, Jimothy," said Sharon Denbrough. Her small white face was pinched by exhaustion and grief. Jim hadn't really expected either her or her husband to come, but they had agreed almost as soon as he'd mentioned it to them. He supposed he ought to be grateful they were here at all, even if grief did tend to make Sharon more sharp-tempered than usual. "You're the one who wanted us all here; the least you can do is pay attention."

"He has been." Amatis sat with her legs drawn under her like a young girl, but her expression was firm. "It's not Jimothy's fault that we've been going around in circles for the past hour."

"And we'll keep going around and around until we figure out a solution," said Neil Mayifeld, an edge to his voice.

"With all due respect, Neil," said Nasreen, in her clipped accent, "there may be no solution to this problem. The best we can hope for is a plan."

"A plan that doesn't involve either mass slavery or—" began Susan, Neil's wife, and then she broke off, biting her lip. She was a pretty, slender woman who looked very like her daughter, Maxine.

"Or allying ourselves with Downworlders?" said Jim. "I'm afraid there's no way around that."

"That's not the problem, and you know it," said Sharon. "It's the whole business about seats on the Council. The Clave will never agree to it. You know that. *Four* whole seats—"

"Not four," Jim said. "One each for the Fair Folk, the Moon's Children, and the children of Lilith."

"The warlocks, the fey, and the lycanthropes," said soft-voiced Senhor Monteverde, his eyebrows arched. "And what of the vampires?"

"They haven't promised me anything," Jim admitted. "And I haven't promised them anything either. They may not be eager to join the Council; they're none too fond of my kind, and none too fond of meetings and rules. But the door is open to them should they change their minds."

"Malachi and his lot will never agree to it, and we may not have enough Council votes without them," muttered Neil. "Besides, without the vampires, what chance do we have?"

"A very good one," snapped Amatis, who seemed to believe in Jim's plan even more than he did. "There are many Downworlders who will fight with us, and they are powerful indeed. The warlocks alone —"

With a shake of her head Senhora Monteverde turned to her husband. "This plan is mad. It will never work. Downworlders cannot be trusted."

"It worked during the Uprising," said Jim.

The Portuguese woman's lips curled back. "Only because Pennywise was fighting with fools for an army," she said. "Not demons. And how are we to know his old Circle members will not go back to him the moment he calls them to his side?"

"Be careful what you say, Senhora," rumbled Zack Denbrough. It was the first time he had spoken in more than an hour; he'd spent most of the evening motionless, immobilized by sorrow. There were lines in his face Jim could have sworn hadn't been there three days ago. His torment was plain in his taut shoulders and clenched fists; Jim could hardly blame him. He had never much liked Zack, but there was something about the sight of such a big man made helpless by grief that was painful to witness. "If you think I would join with Pennywise after George's death—he had my boy murdered—"

"Zack," Sharon murmured. She put her hand on his arm.

"If we do not join with him," said Senhor Monteverde, "*all* our children may die."

"If you think that, then why are you here?" Amatis rose to her feet. "I thought we had agreed—"

So did I. Jim's head ached. It was always like this with them, he thought, two steps forward and a step back. They were as bad as warring Downworlders themselves, if only they could see it. Maybe they'd all be better off if they solved their problems with combat, the way the pack did—

A flash of movement at the doors of the Hall caught his eye. It was momentary, and if it had not been so close to the full moon, he might not have seen it, or recognized the figure who passed quickly before the doors. He wondered for a moment if he was imagining things. Sometimes, when he was very tired, he thought he saw Sonia—in the flicker of a shadow, in the play of light on a wall.

But this wasn't Sonia. Jim rose to his feet. "I'm taking five minutes for some air. I'll be back." He felt them watching him as he made his way to the front doors—all of them, even Amatis. Senhor Monteverde whispered something to his wife in Portuguese; Jim caught "*lobo*," the word for "*wolf*," in the stream of words. *They probably think I'm*

going outside to run in circles and bark at the moon.

The air outside was fresh and cold, the sky a slate-steel gray. Dawn reddened the sky in the east and gave a pale pink cast to the white marble steps leading down from the Hall doors. Richie was waiting for him, halfway down the stairs. The white mourning clothes he wore hit Jim like a slap in the face, a reminder of all the death they'd just endured here, and were about to endure again.

Jim paused several steps above Richie. "What are you doing here, Richard?"

Richie said nothing, and Jim mentally cursed his forgetfulness—Richie didn't like being called Richard and usually responded to the name with a sharp objection. This time, though, he didn't seem to care. The face he raised to Jim was as grimly set as the faces of any of the adults in the Hall. Though Richie was still a year away from being an adult under Clave Law, he'd already seen worse things in his short life than most adults could even imagine.

"Were you looking for your parents?"

"You mean the Denbroughs?" Richie shook his head. "No. I don't want to talk to them. I was looking for you."

"Is it about Eddie?" Jim descended several steps until he stood just above Richie. "Is he all right?"

"He's fine." The mention of Eddie seemed to make Richie tense all over, which in turn sparked Jim's nerves—but Richie would never say Eddie was all right if he weren't.

"Then what is it?"

Richie looked past him, toward the doors of the Hall. "How is it going in there? Any progress?"

"Not really," Jim admitted. "As much as they don't want to surrender to Pennywise, they like the idea of Downworlders on the Council even less. And without the promise of seats on the Council, my people won't fight."

Richie's eyes sparked. "The Clave is going to hate that idea."

"They don't have to love it. They only have to like it better than they like the idea of suicide."

"They'll stall," Richie advised him. "I'd give them a deadline if I were you. The Clave works better with deadlines."

Jim couldn't help but smile. "All the Downworlders I can summon will be approaching the North Gate at twilight. If the Clave agrees to fight with them by then, they'll enter the city. If not, they'll turn around. I couldn't leave it any later than that—it barely gives us enough time to get to Brocelind Plain by midnight as it is."

Richie whistled. "That's theatrical. Hoping the sight of all those Downworlders will inspire the Clave, or scare them?"

"Probably a little of both. Many of the Clave members are associated with Institutes, like you; they're a lot more used to the sight of Downworlders. It's the native Derryiens I'm worried about. The sight of Downworlders at their gates might send them into a panic. On the other hand, it can't hurt for them to be reminded how vulnerable they are."

As if on cue, Richie's gaze flicked up to the ruins of the Gard, a black scar on the hillside over the city.

"I'm not sure anyone needs more reminders of that." He glanced back at Jim, his clear eyes very serious. "I want to tell you something, and I want it to be in confidence."

Jim couldn't hide his surprise. "Why tell *me*? Why not the Denbroughs?"

"Because you're the one who's in charge here, really. You know that."

Jim hesitated. Something about Richie's white and tired face drew sympathy out of his own exhaustion—sympathy and a desire to show this boy, who had been so betrayed and badly used by the adults in his life, that not all adults were like that, that there were some he could rely on. "All right."

“And,” Richie said, “because I trust you to know how to explain it to Eddie.”

“Explain *what* to Eddie?”

“Why I had to do it.” Richie’s eyes were wide in the light of the rising sun; it made him look years younger. “I’m going after Henry, Jim. I know how to find him, and I’m going to follow him until he leads me to Pennywise.”

Jim let his breath out in surprise. “You *know how to find him*?”

“Eleven showed me how to use a tracking spell when Ben was staying with her in Brooklyn. We were trying to use his father’s ring to find him. It didn’t work, but—”

“You’re not a warlock. You shouldn’t be able to do a tracking spell.”

“These are runes. Like the way the Inquisitor watched Ben when he went to see Pennywise on the ship. All I needed to make it work was something of Henry’s.”

“But we went over this with the Mayfields. He left nothing behind. His room was utterly cleared out, probably for exactly this reason.”

“I found something,” said Richie. “A thread soaked in his blood. It’s not much, but it’s enough. I tried it, and it worked.”

“You can’t go haring off after Pennywise on your own, Richie. I won’t let you.”

“You can’t stop me. Not really. Unless you want to fight me right here on these steps. You won’t win, either. You know that as well as I do.” There was a strange note in Richie’s voice, a mixture of certainty and self-hatred.

“Look, however determined you may be to play the solitary hero—”

“I am not a hero,” Richie said. His voice was clear and toneless, as if he were stating the simplest of facts.

“Think of what this will do to the Denbroughs, even if nothing

happens to you. Think of Eddie—”

“You think I *haven’t* thought of Eddie? You think I haven’t thought of my family? Why do you think I’m doing this?”

“Do you think I don’t remember what it’s like to be seventeen?” Jim answered. “To think you have the power to save the world—and not just the power but the responsibility—”

“Look at me,” said Richie. “Look at me and tell me I’m an ordinary seventeen-year-old.”

Jim sighed. “There’s nothing ordinary about you.”

“Now tell me it’s impossible. Tell me what I’m suggesting can’t be done.” When Jim said nothing, Richie went on, “Look, your plan is fine, as far as that goes. Bring in Downworlders, fight Pennywise all the way to the gates of Alicante. It’s better than just lying down and letting him walk over you. But he’ll expect it. You won’t be catching him by surprise. I—I could catch him by surprise. He may not know Henry’s being followed. It’s a chance at least, and we have to take whatever chances we can get.”

“That may be true,” said Jim. “But this is too much to expect of any one person. Even you.”

“But don’t you see—it can only be me,” Richie said, desperation creeping into his voice. “Even if Pennywise senses I’m following him, he might let me get close enough—”

“Close enough to do what?”

“To kill him,” said Richie “What else?”

Jim looked at the boy standing below him on the stairs. He wished in some way he could reach through and see Maggie in her son, the way he saw Sonia in Eddie, but Richie was only, and always, himself—contained, alone, and separate. “You could do that?” He said. “You could kill him?”

“Yes,” Richie said, his voice as distant as an echo. “Now is this where you tell me I can’t kill him because it is an unforgivable crime?”

"No. This is where I tell you that you have to be sure you're capable of it," said Jim, and realized, to his own surprise, that some part of him had already accepted that Richie was going to do exactly what he said he was going to do, and that he would let him. "You can't do all this, cut your ties here and hunt Pennywise down on your own, just to fail at the final hurdle."

"Oh," said Richie, "I'm capable of it." He looked away from Jim, down the steps toward the square that until yesterday morning had been full of bodies. "He destroyed my family. And I hate him for it. I can kill him. He made sure of that."

Jim shook his head. "Whatever your upbringing, Richie, you've fought it. He didn't corrupt you—"

"No," Richie said. "He didn't have to." He glanced up at the sky, striped with blue and gray; birds had begun their morning songs in the trees lining the square. "I'd better go."

"Is there something you wanted me to tell the Denbroughs?"

"No. No, don't tell them anything. They'll just blame you if they find out you knew what I was going to do and you let me go. I left notes," he added. "They'll figure it out."

"Then why—"

"Did I tell you all this? Because I want you to know. I want you to keep it in mind while you make your battle plans. That I'm out there, looking for Pennywise. If I find him, I'll send you a message." He smiled fleetingly. "Think of me as your backup plan."

Jim reached out and clasped the boy's hand. "If your father weren't dead," he said, "he'd be proud of you."

Richie looked surprised for a moment, and then just as quickly he flushed and drew his hand back. "If you knew—" he began, and bit his lip. "Never mind. Good luck to you, Jimothy Hopper. *Ave atque vale.*"

"Let us hope there will be no real farewell," Jim said. The sun was rising fast now, and as Richie lifted his head, frowning at the sudden

intensification of the light, there was something in his face that struck Jim—something in that mixture of vulnerability and stubborn pride. “You remind me of someone,” he said without thinking. “Someone I knew years ago.”

“I know,” Richie said with a bitter twist to his mouth. “I remind you of Wentworth.”

“No,” said Jim, in a wondering voice; but as Richie turned away, the resemblance faded, banishing the ghosts of memory. “No—I wasn’t thinking of Wentworth at all.”

The moment Eddie awoke, he knew Richie was gone, even before he opened his eyes. His hand, still outstretched across the bed, was empty; no fingers returned the pressure of his own. He sat up slowly, his chest tight.

Richie must have drawn the curtains back before he left, because the windows were open and bright bars of sunlight striped the bed. Eddie wondered why the light hadn’t woken him. From the position of the sun, it had to be afternoon. His head felt heavy and thick, his eyes bleary. Maybe it was just that he hadn’t had nightmares last night, for the first time in so long, and his body was catching up on sleep.

It was only when he stood up that Eddie noticed the folded piece of paper on the nightstand. He picked it up with a smile hovering around his lips—so Richie had left a note—and when something heavy slid from beneath the paper and rattled to the floor at his feet, he was so surprised that he jumped back, thinking it was alive.

It lay at his feet, a coil of bright metal. He knew what it was before he bent and picked it up. The chain and silver ring that Richie had worn around his neck. The family ring. He had rarely seen him without it. A sudden sensation of dread washed over him.

He opened the note and scanned the first lines: *“Despite everything, I can’t bear the thought of this ring being lost forever, any more than I can bear the thought of leaving you forever. And though I have no choice about the one, at least I can choose about the other.”*

The rest of the letter seemed to wash together into a meaningless blur of letters; he had to read it over and over to make any sense of it. When he did finally understand, he stood staring down, watching the paper flutter as his hand shook. He understood now why Richie had told him everything he had, and why he had said one night didn't matter. You could say anything you wanted to someone you thought you were never going to see again.

Eddie had no recollection, later, of having decided what to do next, or of having hunted for something to wear, but somehow he was hurrying down the stairs, dressed in Shadowhunter gear, the letter in one hand and the chain with the ring clasped hastily around his throat.

The living room was empty, the fire in the grate burned down to gray ash, but noise and light emanated from the kitchen: a chatter of voices, and the smell of something cooking. *Pancakes*? Eddie thought in surprise. He wouldn't have thought Amatis knew how to make them.

And he was right. Stepping into the kitchen, Eddie felt his eyes widen—Beverly, her glossy red hair swept up in a knot at the back of her neck, stood at the stove, an apron around her waist and a metal spoon in her hand. Ben was sitting on the table behind her, his feet up on a chair, and Amatis, far from telling him to get off the furniture, was leaning against the counter, looking highly entertained.

Beverly waved her spoon at Eddie. "Good morning," she said. "Would you like breakfast? Although, I guess it's more like lunchtime."

Speechless, Eddie looked at Amatis, who shrugged. "They just showed up and wanted to make breakfast," she said, "and I have to admit, I'm not that good a cook."

Eddie thought of Ben's awful soup back at the Institute and suppressed a shudder. "Where's Jim?"

"In Brocelind, with his pack," said Amatis. "Is everything all right, Eddie? You look a little ..."

“Wild-eyed,” Stan showed up behind Eddie, making him jump. “Is everything all right?”

For a moment Eddie couldn’t think of a reply. *They just showed up*, Amatis had said. Which meant Beverly had spent the *entire* night at Ben’s. He stared at her. She didn’t look any different.

“I’m fine,” he said. Now was hardly the time to be worrying about Beverly’s love life. “I need to talk to Ben.”

“So talk,” Ben said. “I’m listening.”

“Alone,” said Eddie.

Stan slid off the table. “Fine. We’ll give you two some privacy,” he said. He turned to Amatis. “Maybe you could show us those baby pictures of Jim you were talking about.”

Amatis shot a worried glance at Eddie but followed Stan and Beverly out of the room. “I suppose I could....”

Ben shook his head as the door closed behind them. “Look,” he said. “If this is about Beverly—”

“It’s not about Beverly. It’s about Richie.” He thrust the note at Ben. “Read this.”

With a sigh, Ben took the note, and sat down to read it. Eddie took an apple out of the basket on the table and sat down as Ben, across from him at the table, scanned the note silently. Eddie picked at the apple peel in silence—he couldn’t imagine actually eating the apple, or, in fact, eating anything at all, ever again.

Ben looked up from the note, his eyebrows arched. “This seems kind of—personal. Are you sure I should be reading it?”

Probably not. Eddie could barely even remember the words in the letter now; in any other situation, he would never have showed it to Ben, but his panic about Richie overrode every other concern. “Just read to the end.”

Ben turned back to the note. When he was done, he set the paper

down on the table. "I thought he might do something like this."

"You see what I mean," Eddie said, his words stumbling over themselves, "but he can't have left that long ago, or gotten that far. We have to go after him and—" He broke off, his brain finally processing what Ben had said and catching up with his mouth. "What do you mean, you thought he might do something like this?"

"Just what I said." Ben pushed a hand through his hair, trying to even it all up, but failed. "Ever since Henry disappeared, everyone's been talking about how to find him. I tore his room at the Mayfields, apart looking for anything we could use to track him—but there was nothing. I might have known that if Richie found anything that would allow him to track Henry, he'd be off like a shot." He bit his lip. "I just would have hoped that he'd have taken Bill with him. Bill won't be happy."

"So, you think Bill will want to go after him, then?" Eddie asked, with renewed hope.

"Eddie." Ben sounded faintly exasperated. "How are we supposed to go after him? How are we supposed to have the slightest idea where he's gone?"

"There must be some way—"

"We can try to track him. Richie is smart, though. He'll have figured out some way to block the tracking, just like Henry did."

A cold anger stirred in Eddie's chest. "Do you even want to find him? Do you even care that he's gone off on what's practically a suicide mission? He can't face Pennywise all by himself."

"Probably not, but I'm sure that Richie has his reasons for—"

"For what? For wanting to *die*?"

"Eddie." Ben's eyes blazed up with a sudden light of anger. "Do you think the rest of us are *safe*? We're all waiting to die or be enslaved. Can you really see Richie doing that, just sitting around waiting for something awful to happen? Can you really see—"

"All I see is that Richie is your brother just like Georgie was," said Eddie, "and you cared what happened to *him*."

He regretted it the moment he said it; Ben's face went white, as if Eddie's words had bleached the color out of the other boy's skin. "Georgie," Ben said with a tightly controlled fury, "was a *little boy*, not a fighter—he was nine years old. Richie is a Shadowhunter, a warrior. If we fight Pennywise, do you think Bill won't be in the battle? Do you think we're not all of us, at all times, prepared to die if we have to, if the cause is great enough?"

"Pennywise will kill Richie if he has to," Eddie said. "He won't spare him."

"I know."

"But all that matters is if he goes out in glory? Won't you even miss him?"

"I will miss him every day," Ben said, "for the rest of my life, which, let's face it, if Richie fails, will probably be about a week long." He shook his head. "You don't get it, Eddie. You don't understand what it's like to live always at war, to grow up with battle and sacrifice. I guess it's not your fault. It's just how you were brought up—"

Eddie held his hands up. "I *do* get it. I know you don't like me, Ben. Because I'm a mundane to you."

"You think *that's* why—" Ben broke off, his eyes bright; not just with anger, Eddie saw with surprise, but with tears. "God, you don't understand *anything*, do you? You've known Richie what, a month? I've known him for seven years. And all the time I've known him, I've never seen him fall in love, never seen him even *like* anyone. He'd hook up with girls, sure. Girls always fell in love with him, but he never cared. And I think that's why Bill thought—" Ben stopped for a moment, holding himself very still. *He's trying not to cry*, Eddie thought in wonder—Ben, who seemed like he never cried. "It always worried me, and Sharon, too—I mean, what kind of teenage boy never even gets a crush on anyone? It was like he was always half-awake where other people were concerned. I thought maybe what had happened with his family had done some sort of permanent

damage to him, like maybe he never really could love anyone. If I'd only known what had really happened with his father—but then I probably would have thought the same thing, wouldn't I? I mean, who *wouldn't* have been damaged by that?

“And then we met you, and it was like he woke up. You couldn't see it, because you'd never known him any different. But I saw it. Keene saw it. Bill saw it—why do you think he hated you so much? It was like that from the second we met you. You thought it was amazing that you could see us, and it was, but what was amazing to me was that Richie *could see you, too*. He kept talking about you all the way back to the Institute; he made Keene send him out to get you; and once he brought you back, he didn't want you to leave again. Wherever you were in the room, he watched you.... He was even jealous of Stan. I'm not sure he realized it himself, but he was. I could tell. Jealous of a mundane. And then after what happened to Stan at the party, he was willing to go with you to the Dumort, to break Clave Law, just to save a mundane he didn't even like. He did it for you. Because if anything had happened to Stan, you would have been hurt. You were the first person outside our family whose happiness I'd ever seen him take into consideration. Because he *loved* you.”

Eddie made a noise in the back of his throat.

“And he couldn't get over you, even when you rejected him a thousand times. I started to hate seeing you. I hated for Richie to see you. It's like an injury you get from demon poison—you have to leave it alone and let it heal. Every time you rip the bandages off, you just open the wound up again. Every time he sees you, it's like tearing off the bandages.”

“I know,” Eddie whispered. “How do you think it is for me?”

“I don't know. We may be brothers but I can't tell what you're feeling. I don't hate you, Eddie. If it were possible, there isn't anyone I'd rather Richie be with. But I hope you can understand when I say that if by some miracle we all get through this, I hope my family moves itself somewhere so far away that we never see you again.”

Tears stung the backs of Eddie's eyes. It was strange, he and Ben sitting here at this table, crying over Richie for reasons that were

both very different and strangely the same. “Why are you telling me all this now?”

“Because you’re accusing me of not wanting to protect Richie. But I do want to protect him. Why do you think I was so upset when you suddenly showed up at the Mayfields’? You act as if you’re not a part of all this, of our world; you stand on the sidelines; but you *are* a part of it. You’re central to it. You can’t just pretend to be a bit player forever, Eddie, not when you’re Pennywise’s son too. Not when Richie is doing what he’s doing partly because of you.”

“Because of *me*?”

“Why do you think he’s so willing to risk himself? Why do you think he doesn’t care if he dies?” Ben’s words drove into Eddie’s ears like sharp needles. “He’s always thought there was something wrong with him, and now, because of you, he thinks he’s cursed forever. I heard him say so to Bill. Why not risk your life, if you don’t want to live anyway? Why not risk your life if you’ll never be happy no matter what you do?”

“Ben, that’s enough.” The door opened, almost silently, and Stan stood in the doorway. Eddie had nearly forgotten how much better his hearing was now. “It’s not Eddie’s fault.”

Color rose in Ben’s face. “Stay out of this, Stan. You don’t know what’s going on.”

Stan stepped into the kitchen, shutting the door behind him. “I heard most of what you’ve been saying,” he told them matter-of-factly. “Even through the wall. You said you don’t know what Eddie’s feeling because you haven’t known him long enough. Well, I have. If you think Richie is the only one who’s suffered, you’re wrong there.”

There was a silence; the fierceness in Ben’s expression was fading slightly. In the distance, Eddie thought he heard the sound of someone knocking on the front door: Jim, probably, or Mike bringing more blood for Stan.

“It’s not because of me that he left,” Eddie said, and his heart began to pound. “When Richie and I went to the Hanscom manor—when we

went to find the Book of the White—”

He broke off as the kitchen door swung open. Amatis stood there, the strangest expression on her face. Beverly was beside her and her face was as white as the walls. For a moment Eddie thought they were frightened, and his heart skipped a beat. But it wasn't fright on Amatis's face, not really. She looked as she had when Eddie and Jim had suddenly showed up at her front door. She looked as if she'd seen a ghost. “Eddie,” she said slowly. “There's someone here to see you —”

Before she could finish, that someone pushed past her into the kitchen. Amatis stood back, and Eddie got his first good look at the intruder—a slender woman, dressed in black. At first all Eddie saw was the Shadowhunter gear and he almost didn't recognize her, not until his eyes reached the woman's face and he felt his stomach drop out of his body the way it had when Richie had driven their motorcycle off the edge of the Dumort roof, a ten-story fall.

It was his mother.

23. Articles of Faith

Since the night he'd come home to find his mother gone, Eddie had imagined seeing her again, well and healthy, so often that his imaginings had taken on the quality of a photograph that had become faded from being taken out and looked at too many times. Those images rose up before him now, even as he stared in disbelief—images in which his mother, looking healthy and happy, hugged Eddie and told him how much she'd missed him but that everything was going to be all right now.

The mother in his imaginings bore very little resemblance to the woman who stood in front of him now. He'd remembered Sonia as gentle and artistic, a little bohemian with her paint-splattered overalls, her dark hair in pigtails or fastened up with a pencil into a messy bun. This Sonia was as bright and sharp as a knife, her hair drawn back sternly, not a wisp out of place; the harsh black offer gear made her face look pale and hard. Nor was her expression the one Eddie had imagined: Instead of delight, there was something very like horror in the way she looked at Eddie, her eyes wide. "Eddie?" she breathed. "*Your clothes.*"

Eddie looked down at himself. He had on Jim's black Shadowhunter gear, exactly what his mother had spent her whole life making sure his son would never have to wear. Eddie swallowed hard and stood up, clutching the edge of the table with his hands. He could see how white his knuckles were, but his hands felt disconnected from his body somehow, as if they belonged to someone else.

Sonia stepped toward him, reaching her arms out. "Eddie—"

And Eddie found himself backing up, so hastily that he hit the counter with the small of his back. Pain flared through him, but he hardly noticed; he was staring at his mother. So was Stan, his mouth slightly open; Beverly, too, looked stricken. Ben stood up, putting himself between Eddie and his mother. "What's going on here?" Ben demanded. "Who are you?" His strong voice wavered slightly as he seemed to catch the expression on Sonia's face; Sonia was staring at him, her hand over her heart.

"I'm Sonia Kas—Henderson. I'm Eddie's mother."

Ben froze and glanced at Eddie, his eyes full of confusion. "But you were in the hospital ... in New York ..."

"I was," Sonia said in a firmer voice. "But thanks to my son, I'm fine now. And I'd like a moment with him."

And Eddie saw it, the look in Ben's face. *He's your son too*, Eddie wanted to shout. *Can't you see this is breaking him?*

"I'm not sure," said Amatis, "that he wants a moment with you." She reached out to put her hand on Sonia's shoulder. "This must be a shock for him—"

Sonia shook off Amatis and moved toward Eddie, reaching her hands out. "Eddie—"

At last, Eddie found his voice. It was a cold, icy voice, so angry it surprised him. "How did you get here, Sonia?"

His mother stopped dead, a look of uncertainty passing over her face. "I Portaled to just outside the city with Jane Ives. Yesterday she came to me in the hospital—she brought the antidote. She told me everything you did for me. All I've wanted since I woke up was to see you...." Her voice trailed off. "Eddie, is something wrong?"

"Why didn't you ever tell me I had a brother?" Eddie said. It wasn't what he'd expected to say, wasn't even what he'd planned to have come out of his mouth. But there it was.

Sonia dropped her hands. "I thought he was dead. I thought it would only hurt you to know."

"Let me tell you something, Mom," Eddie said. "Knowing is better than not knowing. *Every time.*"

"I'm sorry—" Sonia began.

"*Sorry?*" It was as if something inside Eddie had torn open, and everything was pouring out, all his bitterness, all his pent-up rage. "Do you want to explain why you never told me I was a

Shadowhunter? Or that my father was still alive? Oh, and how about that bit where you paid Eleven to steal my memories?”

“I was trying to protect you—”

“Well, you did a *terrible* job!” Eddie’s voice rose. “What did you expect to happen to me after you disappeared? If it hadn’t been for Ben and the others, I’d be dead. You never showed me how to protect myself. You never told me how dangerous things really were. What did you think? That if I couldn’t see the bad things, that meant they couldn’t see me?” His eyes burned. “You knew Pennywise wasn’t dead. You told Jim you thought he was still alive.”

“That’s why I had to hide you,” Sonia said. “I couldn’t risk letting Robert know where you were. I couldn’t let him touch you—”

“Because he turned your first child into a monster,” said Ben for the first time. “and you didn’t want him to do the same to Eddie.”

Shocked speechless, Sonia could only stare at him. “Yes,” she said finally. “Yes, but that’s not all it was—”

“You stole my memories,” Eddie interrupted. “You took them away from me. You took away who I was.”

“That’s not who you are!” Sonia cried. “I never wanted it to be who you were—”

“It doesn’t matter what you wanted!” Eddie shouted. “It is who I am! You took all that away from me and *it didn’t belong to you!*”

Sonia was ashen. Tears rose up in Eddie’s eyes—he couldn’t bear seeing his mother like this, seeing him so hurt, and yet he was the one doing the hurting—and he knew that if he opened his mouth again, more terrible words would come out, more hateful, angry things. He clapped his hand over his mouth and darted for the hallway, pushing past his mother, past Stan’s outstretched hand. All he wanted was to get away. Blindly pushing at the front door, he half-fell out into the street. Behind him, someone called his name, but he didn’t turn around. He was already running.

Richie was somewhat surprised to discover that Henry had left the Bowers horse in the stables rather than galloping away on him the night he fled. Perhaps he had been afraid that Wayfarer might in some manner be tracked.

It gave Richie a certain satisfaction to saddle the stallion up and ride him out of the city. True, if Henry had really wanted Wayfarer, he wouldn't have left him behind—and besides, the horse hadn't really been Henry's to begin with. But the fact was, Richie liked horses. He'd been ten the last time he'd ridden one, but the memories, he was pleased to note, came back fast.

It had taken him and Eddie five hours to walk from the Hanscom manor to Alicante. It took about two hours to get back, riding at a near gallop. By the time they drew up on the ridge overlooking the house and gardens, both he and the horse were covered in a light sheen of sweat.

The misdirection wards that had hidden the manor had been destroyed along with the manor's foundation. What was left of the once elegant building was a heap of smoldering stone. The gardens, singed at the edges now, still brought back memories of the time he'd lived there as a child. There were the rosebushes, denuded of their blossoms now and threaded with green weeds; the stone benches that sat by empty pools; and the hollow in the ground where he'd lain with Eddie the night the manor collapsed. He could see the blue glint of the nearby lake through the trees.

A surge of bitterness caught him. He jammed his hand into his pocket and drew out first a stele—he'd "borrowed" it from Bill's room before he'd left, as a replacement for the one Eddie had lost, since Bill could always get another—and then the thread he'd taken from the sleeve of Eddie's coat. It lay in his palm, stained red-brown at one end. He closed his fist around it, tightly enough to make the bones jut out under his skin, and with his stele traced a rune on the back of his hand. The faint sting was more familiar than painful. He watched the rune sink into his skin like a stone sinking through water, and closed his eyes.

Instead of the backs of his eyelids he saw a valley. He was standing on a ridge looking down over it, and as if he were gazing at a map

that pinpointed his location, he knew exactly where he was. He remembered how the Inquisitor had known exactly where Pennywise's boat was in the middle of the East River and realized, *This is how she did it*. Every detail was clear—every blade of grass, the scatter of browning leaves at his feet—but there was no sound. The scene was eerily silent.

The valley was a horseshoe with one end narrower than the other. A bright silver rill of water—a creek or stream—ran through the center of it and disappeared among rocks at the narrow end. Beside the stream sat a gray stone house, white smoke puffing from the square chimney. It was an oddly pastoral scene, tranquil under the blue gaze of the sky. As he watched, a slender figure swung into view. Henry. Now that he was no longer bothering to pretend, his arrogance was plain in the way he walked, in the jut of his shoulders, the faint smirk on his face. Henry knelt down by the side of the stream and plunged his hands in, splashing water up over his face and hair.

Richie opened his eyes. Beneath him Wayfarer was contentedly cropping grass. Richie shoved the stele and thread back into his pocket, and with a single last glance at the ruins of the house, he gathered up the reins and dug his heels into the horse's sides.

Eddie lay in the grass near the edge of Gard Hill and stared morosely down at Alicante. The view from here was pretty spectacular, he had to admit. He could look out over the rooftops of the city, with their elegant carvings and rune-Marked weather vanes, past the spires of the Hall of Accords, out toward something that gleamed in the far distance like the edge of a silver coin—Lake Lyn? The black ruins of the Gard hulked behind him, and the demon towers shone like crystal. Eddie almost thought he could see the wards, shimmering like an invisible net woven around the borders of the city.

Eddie looked down at his hands. He had torn up several fistfuls of grass in the last spasms of his anger, and his fingers were sticky with dirt and blood where he'd ripped a nail half off. Once the fury had passed, a feeling of utter emptiness had replaced it. He hadn't realized how angry he'd been with his mother, not until he'd stepped through the door and Eddie had set his panic about Sonia's life aside

and realized what lay under it.

“Mind if I join you?”

He jumped in surprise and rolled onto his side to look up. Beverly stood over him, her hands in her pockets. Someone—Ben, probably—had given her a dark jacket of the tough black stuff Shadowhunters used for their gear. She looked different. “You snuck up on me,” he said. “I guess I’m not much of a Shadowhunter, huh.”

Beverly shrugged. “Well, in your defense, I do move with a silent, pantherlike grace.”

Despite himself, Eddie smiled. He sat up, brushing dirt off his hands. “Go ahead and join me. This mope-fest is open to all.”

Sitting beside him, Beverly looked out over the city and whistled. “Nice view.”

“It is.” Eddie looked at her sidelong. “How did you find me?”

“Well, it took me a few hours.” She smiled, a little crookedly. “Then I remembered how when we used to fight, back in first grade, you’d go and sulk on my roof and my mom would have to get you down.”

“So?”

“I know you,” she said. “When you get upset, you head for high ground.”

She held something out to him—his green coat, neatly folded. He took it and shrugged it on—the poor thing was already showing distinct signs of wear. There was even a small hole in the elbow big enough to wiggle a finger through. “Thanks, Bev.” He laced his hands around his knees and stared out at the city. The sun was low in the sky, and the towers had begun to glow a faint reddish pink. “Did my mom send you up here to get me?”

Beverly shook her head. “Jim, actually. And he just asked me to tell you that you might want to head back before sunset. Some pretty important stuff is happening.”

“What kind of stuff?”

“Jim gave the Clave until sunset to decide whether they’d agree to give the Downworlders seats on the Council. The Downworlders are all coming to the North Gate at twilight. If the Clave agrees, they can come into Alicante. If not ...”

“They get sent away,” Eddie finished. “And the Clave gives itself up to Pennywise.”

“Yeah.”

“They’ll agree,” said Eddie. “They have to.” He hugged his knees. “They’d never pick Pennywise. No one would.”

“Glad to see your idealism hasn’t been damaged,” said Beverly, and though her voice was light, Eddie heard another voice through it. Richie’s, saying he wasn’t an idealist, and he shivered, despite the coat he was wearing.

“Beverly?” he said. “I have a stupid question.”

“What is it?”

“Did you sleep with Ben?”

Beverly made a choking sound. Eddie swiveled slowly around to look at her. “Are you okay?” he asked.

“I think so,” she said, recovering her poise with apparent effort. “Are you serious?”

“Well, you were gone all night.”

Beverly was silent for a long moment. Finally she said, “I’m not sure it’s your business, but no.”

“So you’re dating Mike, then?”

“Eddie,” Beverly said, “why are you asking me about Mike? Don’t you want to talk about your mom? Or Richie? Ben told me that he left. I know how you must be feeling.”

"No," Eddie said. "No, I don't think you do."

"You're not the only person who's ever felt abandoned." There was an edge of impatience to Beverly's voice. "I guess I just thought—I mean, I've never seen you so angry. And at your mom. I thought you missed her."

"Of course I missed her!" Eddie said, realizing even as he said it how the scene in the kitchen must have looked. Especially to his mother. He pushed the thought away. "It's just that I've been so focused on rescuing her—saving her from Pennywise, then figuring out a way to cure her—that I never even stopped to think about how angry I was that she lied to me all these years. That she kept all of this from me, kept the truth from me. Never let me know who I really was."

"But that's not what you said when she walked into the room," Beverly said quietly. "You said, 'Why didn't you ever tell me I had a brother?'"

"I know." Eddie yanked a blade of grass out of the dirt, worrying it between his fingers. "I guess I can't help thinking that if I'd known the truth, everything would've been different, for me, for Ben, for you." He sighed. "Maybe I wouldn't have fallen in love with Richie."

Beverly was silent for a moment. "I don't think I've ever heard you say that before."

"That I love him?" He laughed, but it sounded dreary even to his ears. "Seems useless to pretend like I don't, at this point. Maybe it doesn't matter. I probably won't ever see him again, anyway."

"He'll come back."

"Maybe."

"He'll come back," Beverly said again. "For you."

"I don't know." Eddie shook his head. It was getting colder as the sun dipped to touch the edge of the horizon. He narrowed his eyes, leaning forward, staring. "Beverly. Look."

She followed his gaze. Beyond the wards, at the North Gate of the

city, hundreds of dark figures were gathering, some huddled together, some standing apart: the Downworlders Jim had called to the city's aid, waiting patiently for word from the Clave to let them in. A shiver sizzled down Eddie's spine. He was poised not just on the crest of this hill, looking down over a steep drop to the city below, but at the edge of a crisis, an event that would change the workings of the whole Shadowhunting world. "They're here," Beverly said, half to herself. "I wonder if that means the Clave's decided?"

"I hope so." The grass blade Eddie had been worrying at was a mangled green mess; he tossed it aside and yanked up another one. "I don't know what I'll do if they decide to give in to Pennywise. Maybe I can create a Portal that'll take us all away to somewhere Pennywise will never find us. A deserted island, or something."

"Okay, I have a stupid question myself," Beverly said. "You can create new runes, right? Why can't you just create one to destroy every demon in the world? Or kill Pennywise?"

"It doesn't work like that," Eddie said. "I can only create runes I can visualize. The whole image has to come into my head, like a picture. When I try to visualize kill Pennywise or rule the world or something, I don't get any images. Just white noise."

"But where do the images of the runes come from, do you think?"

"I don't know," Eddie said. "All the runes the Shadowhunters know come from the Gray Book. That's why they can only be put on Nephilim; that's what they're for. But there are other, older runes. Eleven told me that. Like the Mark of Cain. It was a protection Mark, but not one from the Gray Book. So when I think of these runes, like the Fearless rune, I don't know if it's something I'm inventing, or something I'm remembering —runes older than Shadowhunters. Runes as old as angels themselves." He thought of the rune Ithuriel had showed him, the one as simple as a knot. Had it come from his own mind, or the angel's? Or was it just something that had always existed, like the sea or the sky? The thought made him shiver.

"Are you cold?" Beverly asked.

"Yes—aren't you?"

"Not really, this leather is *amazing*." Beverly touched the material of the jacket.

Eddie was about to reply some snarky comment, but stopped in his tracks as someone appeared just in front of him, bumping heads with him.

"Shit!" It was Stan, he brought a hand to rub at his forehead. "I think I broke a vein."

"What the hell?" Beverly frowned. "How did you find us?"

Stan pointed at his ear. "Vampire hearing, Bev. I'm surprised neither of you remember that."

"So, you were eavesdropping?"

Stan shrugged. "I can't help it, it happens even if I don't want to."

Beverly rolled her eyes. "We were actually having a *moment* here, Stan."

"Come on, there aren't two if there aren't three."

Eddie and Beverly looked at each other's then shook their heads, they had no idea what the hell Stan was talking about.

Eddie glanced up at him. He was staring down at the North Gate, around which the dark figures of Downworlders still crowded, almost motionless. The red light of the demon towers reflected in his eyes; he looked like someone in a photograph taken with a flash. Eddie could see faint blue veins spidering just under the surface of his skin where it was thinnest: at his temples, at the base of his collarbone. He knew enough about vampires to know that this meant it had been a while since he'd fed. "Are you hungry?"

Now he did glance down at Eddie. "Afraid I'm going to bite you?"

"You know you're welcome to my blood whenever you want it."

A shiver, not from cold, passed over him, and he pulled Eddie tightly against his side. "I'd never do that," he said. And then, more lightly,

“Besides, I’ve already drunk Ben’s blood—I’ve had enough of feeding off my friends.”

Slowly, Eddie's mind full of the image of Ben, he said, “Do you think that’s why ...?”

“Why what?”

“Why sunlight doesn’t hurt you. I mean, it did hurt you before that, didn’t it? Before that night on the boat?”

He nodded reluctantly.

“So what else changed? Or is it just that you drank his blood?”

“You mean because he’s Nephilim? Yes, but not just because of that. You and Ben—you’re not quite normal, are you? I mean, not normal Shadowhunters. Whatever makes you different is what makes me different as well. Like the Seelie Queen said. You were experiments.” He smiled at Eddie's startled look. “I’m not stupid. I can put these things together. You with your rune powers, and Ben, well ... no one could be that annoying without some kind of supernatural assistance.”

“Do you really dislike him that much?” Beverly asked.

“I don’t dislike Ben,” Stan protested. “I mean, I hated him at first, sure. He seemed so arrogant and sure of himself, but not as much as Richie.”

“He was not.” Eddie protested.

“Let me finish, Eddie” There was a breathless undercurrent in Stan’s voice, if someone who never breathed could be said to be breathless. He sounded as if he were racing toward something. “I could tell how much you liked Richie, and I thought he was using you, that you were just some stupid mundane boy he could impress with his Shadowhunter tricks. First I told myself that you’d never fall for it, and then that even if you did, he’d get tired of you eventually and you’d come back to me. I’m not proud of that, but when you’re desperate, you’ll believe anything, I guess. Until that night in the Seelie Court when you kissed him. I could see ...”

“See what?” Eddie said, unable to bear the pause.

“The way he looked at you. I got it then. He was never using you. He loved you, and it was killing him.”

“Is that why you went to the Dumort?” Eddie whispered. It was something he’d always wanted to know but had never been able to bring himself to ask.

“Because of you and Richie? Not in any real way, no. Ever since that night in the hotel, I’d been wanting to go back. I dreamed about it. And I’d wake up out of bed, getting dressed, or already on the street, and I knew I wanted to go back to the hotel. It was always worse at night, and worse the closer I got to the hotel. It didn’t even occur to me that it was something supernatural—I thought it was post-traumatic stress or something. That night, I was so exhausted and angry, and we were so close to the hotel, and it was night—I barely even remember what happened. I just remember walking away from the park, and then—nothing.”

“But if you hadn’t been angry at me—if we hadn’t upset you—”

“It’s not like you had a choice,” Stan said. “And it’s not like I didn’t know. You can only push the truth down for so long, and then it bubbles back up. The mistake I made was not telling you what was going on with me, not telling you about the dreams. You know what Adrian told me? That I didn’t know how to be a good vampire; that true vampires accept that they’re dead. But as long as I remember what it was like to love you, I’ll always feel like I’m alive.”

“Stan—”

“Look!” Beverly cut him off with a gesture, her blue eyes widening. “Down there.”

The sun was a red sliver on the horizon; as he looked, it flickered and vanished, disappearing past the dark rim of the world. The demon towers of Alicante blazed into sudden incandescent life. In their light Eddie could see the dark crowd swarming restlessly around the North Gate. “What’s going on?” he whispered. “The sun’s set; why aren’t the gates opening?”

Stan was motionless. "The Clave," he said. "They must have said no to Luke."

"But they can't have!" Eddie's voice rose sharply. "That would mean —"

"They're going to give themselves up to Pennywise."

"They can't!" Eddie cried again, but even as he stared, he saw the groups of dark figures surrounding the wards turn and move away from the city, streaming like ants out of a destroyed anthill.

Beverly's face was waxy in the fading light. "I guess," she said, "they really hate us that much. They'd really rather choose Pennywise."

"It's not hate," Eddie said. "It's that they're afraid. Even Pennywise was afraid." He said it without thinking, and realized as he said it that it was true. "Afraid and jealous."

Beverly flicked a glance toward him in surprise. "Jealous?"

But Eddie was back in the dream Ithuriel had showed him, Pennywise's voice echoing in his ears. *I dreamed that you would tell me why. Why Raziel created us, his race of Shadowhunters, yet did not give us the powers Downworlders have—the speed of the wolves, the immortality of the Fair Folk, the magic of warlocks, even the endurance of vampires. He left us naked before the hosts of hell but for these painted lines on our skin. Why should their powers be greater than ours? Why can't we share in what they have?*

His lips parted and he stared unseeing down at the city below. He was vaguely aware that Stan was saying his name, but his mind was racing. The angel could have showed him anything, he thought, but it had chosen to show him these scenes, these memories, for a reason. He thought of Pennywise crying, *That we should be bound to Downworlders, tied to those creatures!*

And the rune. The one he had dreamed of. The rune as simple as a knot.

Why can't we share in what they have?

“Binding,” he said out loud. “It’s a binding rune. It joins like and unlike.”

“What?” Stan stared at him in confusion.

He scrambled to his feet, brushing off the dirt. “I have to get down there. Where are they?”

“Where are who? Eddie—”

“The *Clave*. Where are they meeting? Where’s Jim?”

Stan rose to his feet. “The Accords Hall. Eddie—”

But he was already racing toward the winding path that led to the city. Swearing under their breath, Stan and Beverly followed.

The Hall was full of Shadowhunters, more Shadowhunters than Eddie had ever seen in one place before, even on the night of Pennywise’s attack. Their voices rose in a roar like a crashing avalanche; most of them had gathered into contentious, shouting groups—the dais was deserted, the map of Derry hanging forlornly behind it.

He looked around for Jim. It took him a moment to find him, leaning against a pillar with his eyes half-closed. He looked awful—half-dead, his shoulders slumped. Amatis stood behind him, patting his shoulder worriedly. Eddie looked around, but Sonia was nowhere to be seen in the crowd.

For just a moment he hesitated. Then he thought of Richie, going after Pennywise, doing it alone, knowing that he might well get himself killed. He knew he was a part of this, a part of all of it, and Eddie was too—he always had been, even when he hadn’t known it. Adrenaline was still coursing through him in spikes, sharpening his perception, making everything seem clear. Almost too clear. He squeezed Stan and Beverly’s hand. “Wish me luck,” he said, and then his feet were carrying him toward the dais steps, almost without his volition, and then he was standing on the dais and turning to face the crowd.

He wasn't sure what he'd expected. Gasps of surprise? A sea of hushed, expectant faces? They barely noticed him—only Jim looked up, as if he sensed him there, and froze with a look of astonishment on his face. And there was someone coming toward Eddie through the crowd—a tall man with bones as prominent as the prow of a sailing ship. Consul Malachi. He was gesturing at Eddie to get down from the dais, shaking his head and shouting something he couldn't hear. More Shadowhunters were turning toward him now as he made his way through the throng.

Eddie had what he wanted now—all eyes riveted on him. He heard the whispers running through the crowd. *That's him. Pennywise's son.*

"You're right," he said, casting his voice as far and as loudly as he could, "I am Pennywise's son. I never even knew he was my father until a few weeks ago. I never even knew he existed until a few weeks ago. I know a lot of you are going to believe that's not true, and that's fine. Believe what you want. Just as long as you also believe I know things about Pennywise you don't know, things that could help you win this battle against him—if only you let me tell you what they are."

"Ridiculous." Malachi stood at the foot of the dais steps. "This is ridiculous. You're just a little boy—"

"He's Sonia Henderson's child." It was Neil Mayfield.. Having pushed his way to the front of the crowd, he held up a hand. "Let the boy say his piece, Malachi."

The crowd was buzzing. "You," Eddie said to the Consul. "You and the Inquisitor threw my friend Stan into prison—"

Malachi sneered. "Your friend the vampire?"

"He told me you asked him what happened to Pennywise's ship that night on the East River. You thought Pennywise must have done something, some kind of black magic. Well, he didn't. If you want to know what destroyed that ship, the answer is me. I did it."

Malachi's disbelieving laugh was echoed by several others in the crowd. Jim was looking at Eddie, shaking his head, but Eddie plowed

on.

"I did it with a rune," he said. "It was a rune so strong it made the ship come apart in pieces. I can create new runes. Not just the ones in the Gray Book. Runes no one's ever seen before—powerful ones—"

"That's enough," Malachi roared. "This is ridiculous. No one can create new runes. It's a complete impossibility." He turned to the crowd. "Like his father, this boy is nothing but a liar."

"He's not lying." The voice came from the back of the crowd. It was clear, strong, and purposeful. The crowd turned, and Eddie saw who had spoken: It was Bill. He stood with Beverly on one side of him and Stan on the other. Eleven was with them, and so was Sharon Denbrough. They formed a small, determined-looking knot by the front doors. "I've s-seen him create a rune. He even used it on me. It worked."

"You're lying," the Consul said, but doubt had crept into his eyes. "To protect your friend—"

"Really, Malachi," Sharon said crisply. "Why would my son lie about something like this, when the truth can so easily be discovered? Give the boy a stele and let him create a rune."

A murmur of assent ran around the Hall. Neil Mayfield stepped forward and held a stele up to Eddie. He took it gratefully and turned back to the crowd.

His mouth went dry. His adrenaline was still up, but it wasn't enough to completely drown his stage fright. What was he supposed to do? What kind of rune could he create that would convince this crowd he was telling the truth? What would *show* them the truth?

He looked out then, through the crowd, and saw Stan with the Denbroughs, looking at him across the empty space that separated them. It was the same way that Richie had looked at him at the manor. It was the one thread that bound these two boys that Eddie loved so much, he thought, their one commonality: They both believed in him even when he didn't believe in himself.

Looking at Stan, and thinking of Richie, Eddie brought the stele down and drew its stinging point against the inside of his wrist, where his pulse beat. He didn't look down as he was doing it but drew blindly, trusting himself and the stele to create the rune he needed. He drew it faintly, lightly—he would need it only for a moment—but without a second's hesitation.

The first thing he saw when he'd finished was Malachi. His face had gone white, and he was backing away from Eddie with a look of horror. He said something—a word in a language he didn't recognize—and then behind him he saw Jim, staring at him, his mouth slightly open. “*Sonia?*” Jim said.

Eddie shook his head at him, just slightly, and looked out at the crowd. It was a blur of faces, fading in and out as he stared. Some were smiling, some glancing around the crowd in surprise, some turning to the person who stood next to them. A few wore expressions of horror or amazement, hands clamped over their mouths. He saw Bill glance quickly at Stan, and then at Eddie, in disbelief, and Beverly looking on in puzzlement, and then Amatis came forward, shoving her way past Neil Mayfield's bulk, and ran up to the edge of the dais. “Will!” she said, looking up at Eddie with a sort of dazzled amazement. “*Will!*”

“Oh,” Eddie said. “Oh, Amatis, no,” and then he felt the rune magic slid from him, as if he'd shed a thin, invisible garment. Amatis's eager face dropped, and she backed away from the dais, her expression half-crestfallen and half-amazed.

Eddie looked out across the crowd. They were utterly silent, every face turned to him. “I know what you all just saw,” he said. “And I know that you know that that kind of magic is beyond any glamour or illusion. And I did that with one rune, a single rune, a rune that I created. There are reasons why I have this ability, and I know you might not like them or even believe them, but it doesn't matter. What matters is that I can help you win this battle against Pennywise, if you'll let me.”

“There will be no battle against Pennywise,” Malachi said. He didn't meet Eddie's eyes as he spoke. “The Clave has decided. We will agree to Pennywise's terms and lay down our arms tomorrow morning.”

"You can't do that," Eddie said, a tinge of desperation entering his voice. "You think everything will be all right if you just give up? You think Pennywise will let you keep on living like you have already? You think he'll confine his killing to demons and Downworlders?" He swept his gaze across the room. "Most of you haven't seen Pennywise in fifteen years. Maybe you've forgotten what he's really like. But I know. I've heard him talk about his plans. You think you can still live your lives under Pennywise's rule, but you won't be able to. He'll control you completely, because he'll always be able to threaten to destroy you with the Mortal Instruments. He'll start with Downworlders, of course. But then he'll go to the Clave. He'll kill them first because he thinks they're weak and corrupt. Then he'll start in on anyone who has a Downworlder anywhere in their family. Maybe a werewolf brother"—his eyes swept over Amatis—"or anyone who's ever so much as befriended a Downworlder. And then he'll go after anyone who's ever employed the services of a warlock. How many of you would that be?"

"This is nonsense," Malachi said crisply. "Pennywise is not interested in destroying Nephilim."

"But he doesn't think anyone who associates with Downworlders is worthy of being called Nephilim," Eddie insisted. "Look, your war isn't against Pennywise. It's against demons. Keeping demons from this world is your mandate, a mandate from heaven. And a mandate from heaven isn't something you can just ignore. Downworlders hate demons too. They destroy them too. If Pennywise has his way, he'll spend so much of his time trying to murder every Downworlder, and every Shadowhunter who's ever associated with them, that he'll forget all about the demons, and so will you, because you'll be so busy being afraid of Pennywise. And they'll overrun the world, and that will be that."

"I see where this is going," Malachi said through gritted teeth. "We will not fight beside Downworlders in the service of a battle we can't possibly win—"

"But you can win it," Eddie said. "You can." His throat was dry, his head aching, and the faces in the crowd before him seemed to meld into a featureless blur, punctuated here and there by soft white explosions of light. *But you can't stop now. You have to keep going. You*

have to try. “My father hates Downworlders because he’s jealous of them,” he went on, his words tripping over one another. “Jealous and afraid of all the things they can do that he can’t. He hates that in some ways they’re more powerful than Nephilim, and I’d bet he’s not alone in that. It’s easy to be afraid of what you don’t share.” He took a breath. “But what if you could share it? What if I could make a rune that could bind each of you, each Shadowhunter, to a Downworlder who was fighting by your side, and you could share your powers—you could be as fast-healing as a vampire, as tough as a werewolf, or as swift as a faerie knight. And they, in turn, could share your training, your fighting skills. You could be an unbeatable force—if you’ll let me Mark you, and if you’ll fight with the Downworlders. Because if you don’t fight beside them, the rune won’t work.” He paused. “Please,” he said, but the word came almost inaudibly out of his dry throat. “Please let me Mark you.”

His words fell into a ringing silence. The world moved in a shifting blur, and he realized that he’d delivered the last half of his speech staring up at the ceiling of the Hall and that the soft white explosions he’d seen had been the stars coming out in the night sky, one by one. The silence went on and on as his hands, at his sides, curled themselves slowly into fists. And then slowly, very slowly, he lowered his gaze and met the eyes of the crowd staring back at him.

24. What Family Actually Means

Notes for the Chapter:

Another long chapter beware XD

Eddie sat on the top step of the Accords Hall, looking out over Angel Square. The moon had come up earlier and was just visible over the roofs of the houses. The demon towers reflected back its light, silver-white. The darkness hid the scars and bruises of the city well; it looked peaceful under the night sky—if one didn't look up at Gard Hill and the ruined outline of the citadel. Guards patrolled the square below, appearing and disappearing as they moved in and out of the illumination of the witchlight lamps. They studiously ignored Eddie's presence

A few steps below him, Stan was pacing back and forth, his footsteps utterly soundless. He had his hands in his pockets, and when he turned at the end of the stairs to walk back toward Eddie, the moonlight glossed off his pale skin as if it were a reflective surface.

"Quit pacing," Eddie told him. "You're just making me more nervous."

"I feel like we've been out here forever." Beverly said, who was beside Stan trying to hear the crowd.

Eddie strained his ears, but he couldn't hear more than the dull murmur of many voices coming through the closed double doors of the Hall. "Can you hear what they're saying inside?" he asked Stan.

Stan half-closed his eyes; he appeared to be concentrating hard. "A little," he said after a pause.

"I wish I were in there," Eddie said, kicking his heels irritably against the steps. Jim had asked him to wait outside the doors while the Clave deliberated; he'd wanted to send Amatis out with him, but Stan and Beverly had insisted on coming instead, saying it would be better to have Amatis inside, supporting Eddie. "I wish I were part of the meeting."

“No,” Stan said. “You don’t.”

He knew why Jim had asked him to wait outside. He could imagine what they were saying about him in there. *Liar. Freak. Fool. Crazy. Stupid. Monster. Pennywise’s son.* Perhaps he was better off outside the Hall, but the tension of anticipating the Clave’s decision was almost painful.

“Maybe I can climb one of those,” Stan said, eyeing the fat white pillars that held up the slanted roof of the Hall. Runes were carved on them in overlapping patterns, but otherwise there were no visible handholds. “Work off steam that way.”

“Oh, come on,” Beverly said. “You’re a vampire, not Spider-Man.”

Stan’s only response was to jog lightly up the steps to the base of a pillar. He eyed it thoughtfully for a moment before putting his hands to it and starting to climb. Eddie watched him, openmouthed, as his fingertips and feet found impossible holds on the ridged stone.

“You *are* Spider-Man!” Beverly exclaimed.

Stan glanced down from his perch halfway up the pillar. “That makes you Mary Jane. She has red hair,” he said. He glanced out across the city, frowning. “I was hoping I could see the North Gate from here, but I’m not high enough.”

Eddie knew why he wanted to see the gate. Messengers had been dispatched there to ask the Downworlders to wait while the Clave deliberated, and Eddie could only hope they were willing to do it. And if they were, what was it like out there? Eddie pictured the crowd waiting, milling, wondering....

The double doors of the Hall cracked open. A slim figure slipped through the gap, closed the door, and turned to face Eddie. She was in shadow, and it was only when she moved forward, closer to the witchlight that illuminated the steps, that Eddie saw the bright blaze of her brown hair and recognized his mother.

Sonia looked up, her expression bemused. “Well, hello, Stan. Glad to see you’re...adjusting.”

Stan let go of the pillar and dropped, landing lightly at its base. He looked mildly abashed. "Hey, Mrs. Kaspbrak."

"I don't know if there's any point in calling me that now," said Eddie's mother. "Maybe you should just call me Sonia." She hesitated. "You know, strange as this—situation— is, it's good to see you here with Eddie. You too, Beverly. I can't remember the last time you three were apart."

Beverly looked acutely embarrassed. "It's good to see you, too."

"Thank you, Beverly." Sonia glanced at his son. "Now, Eddie, would it be all right for us to talk for a moment? Alone?"

Eddie sat motionless for a long moment, staring at his mother. It was hard not to feel like he was staring at a stranger. His throat felt tight, almost too tight to speak. He glanced toward his friends, who were clearly waiting for a signal from him to tell them whether to stay or go. He sighed. "Okay."

Stan gave Eddie an encouraging thumbs-up before grabbing Beverly's sleeve and vanishing back into the Hall. Eddie turned away and stared fixedly down into the square, watching the guards do their rounds, as Sonia came and sat down next to him. Part of Eddie wanted to lean sideways and put his head on his mother's shoulder. He could even close his eyes, pretend everything was all right. The other part of him knew that it wouldn't make a difference; he couldn't keep his eyes closed forever.

"Eddie," Sonia said at last, very softly. "I am so sorry."

Eddie stared down at his hands. He was, he realized, still holding Neil Mayfield's stole. Eddie hoped he didn't think he'd meant to steal it. "I never thought I'd see this place again," Sonia went on. Eddie stole a sideways glance at his mother and saw that he was looking out over the city, at the demon towers casting their pale whitish light over the skyline. "I dreamed about it sometimes. I even wanted to paint it, to paint my memories of it, but I couldn't do that. I thought if you ever saw the paintings, you might ask questions, might wonder how those images had ever come into my head. I was so frightened you'd find out where I was really from. Who I really was."

“And now I have.”

“And now you have.” Sonia sounded wistful. “And you have every reason to hate me.”

“I don’t hate you, Mom,” Eddie said. “I just...”

“Don’t trust me,” said Sonia. “I can’t blame you. I should have told you the truth.” She touched Eddie’s shoulder lightly and seemed encouraged when Eddie didn’t move away. “I can tell you I did it to protect you, but I know how that must sound. I was there, just now, in the Hall, watching you—”

“You were there?” Eddie was startled. “I didn’t see you.”

“I was in the very back of the Hall. Jim had told me not to come to the meeting, that my presence would just upset everyone and throw everything off, and he was probably right, but I so badly wanted to be there. I slipped in after the meeting started and hid in the shadows. But I was there. And I just wanted to tell you—”

“That I made a fool out of myself?” Eddie said bitterly. “I already know that.”

“No. I wanted to tell you that I was proud of you.”

Eddie slewed around to look at his mother. “You were?”

Sonia nodded. “Of course I was. The way you stood up in front of the Clave like that. The way you showed them what you could do. You made them look at you and see the person they loved most in the world, didn’t you?”

“Yeah,” Eddie said. “How did you know?”

“Because I heard them all calling out different names,” Sonia said softly. “But I still saw you.”

“Oh.” Eddie looked down at his feet. “Well, I’m still not sure they believe me about the runes. I mean, I hope so, but—”

“Can I see it?” Sonia asked.

“See what?”

“The rune. The one that you created to bind Shadowhunters and Downworlders.” She hesitated. “If you can’t show me...”

“No, it’s all right.” With the stele, Eddie traced the lines of the rune the angel had showed him across the marble of the Accords Hall step, and they blazed up in hot gold lines as he drew. It was a strong rune, a map of curving lines overlapping a matrix of straight ones. Simple and complex at the same time. Eddie knew now why it had seemed somehow unfinished to him when he had visualized it before: It needed a matching rune to make it work. A twin. A partner. “Alliance,” he said, drawing the stele back. “That’s what I’m calling it.”

Sonia watched silently as the rune flared and faded, leaving faint black lines on the stone.

“When I was a young woman,” she said finally, “I fought so hard to bind Downworlders and Shadowhunters together, to protect the Accords. I thought I was chasing a sort of dream—something most Shadowhunters could hardly imagine. And now you’ve made it concrete and literal and real.” She blinked hard. “I realized something, watching you there in the Hall. You know, all these years I’ve tried to protect you by hiding you away. It’s why I hated you going to Pandemonium. I knew it was a place where Downworlders and mundanes mingled—and that that meant there would be Shadowhunters there. I imagined it was something in your blood that drew you to the place, something that recognized the shadow world even without your Sight. I thought you would be safe if only I could keep that world hidden from you. I never thought about trying to protect you by helping you to be strong and to fight.” She sounded sad. “But somehow you got to be strong anyway. Strong enough for me to tell you the truth, if you still want to hear it.”

“I don’t know.” Eddie thought of the images the angel had showed him, how terrible they had been. “I know I was angry with you for lying. But I’m not sure I want to find out any more horrible things.”

“I talked to Jim. He thought you should know what I have to tell you. The whole story. All of it. Things I’ve never told anyone, never told

him, even. I can't promise you that the whole truth is pleasant. But it is the truth."

The Law is hard, but it is the Law. He owed it to Ben to find out the truth as much as he owed it to himself. Eddie tightened his grip on the stele in his hand, his knuckles whitening. "I want to know everything."

"Everything..." Sonia took a deep breath. "I don't even know where to start."

"How about starting with how you could marry Pennywise? How you could have married a man like that, made him my father—he's a *monster*."

"No. He's a man. He's not a good man. But if you want to know why I married him, it was because I loved him."

"You can't have," Eddie said. "Nobody could."

"I was your age when I fell in love with him," Sonia said. "I thought he was perfect— brilliant, clever, wonderful, funny, charming. I know, you're looking at me as if I've lost my mind. You only know Robert the way he is now. You can't imagine what he was like then. When we were at school together, *everyone* loved him. He seemed to give off light, in a way, like there was some special and brilliantly illuminated part of the universe that only he had access to, and if we were lucky, he might share it with us, even just a little. Every girl loved him, and I thought I didn't have a chance. There was nothing special about me. I wasn't even that popular; Jim was one of my closest friends, and I spent most of my time with him. But still, somehow, Robert chose me."

Gross, Eddie wanted to say. But he held back. Maybe it was the wistfulness in his mother's voice, mixed with regret. Maybe it was what she had said about Pennywise giving off light. Eddie had thought the same thing about Richie before, and then felt stupid for thinking it. But maybe everyone in love felt that way.

"Okay," he said, "I get it. But you were sixteen then. That doesn't mean you had to marry him later."

"I was eighteen when we got married. He was nineteen," Sonia said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Oh my God," Eddie said in horror. "You'd kill me if I wanted to get married when I was eighteen."

"I would," Sonia agreed. "But Shadowhunters tend to get married earlier than mundanes. Their—*our*—life spans are shorter; a lot of us die violent deaths. We tend to do everything earlier because of it. Even so, I was young to get married. Still, my family was happy for me—even Jim was happy for me. Everyone thought Robert was a wonderful boy. And he was, you know, just a boy then. The only person who ever told me I shouldn't marry him was Rena. We'd been friends in school, but when I told her I was engaged, she said that Robert was selfish and hateful, that his charm masked a terrible amorality. I told myself she was jealous."

"Was she?"

"No," said Sonia, "she was telling the truth. I just didn't want to hear it." She glanced down at her hands.

"But you were sorry," Eddie said. "After you married him, you were sorry you did it, right?"

"Eddie," Jocelyn said. She sounded tired. "We were *happy*. At least for the first few years. We went to live in my parents' manor house, where I grew up; Robert didn't want to be in the city, and he wanted the rest of the Circle to avoid Alicante and the prying eyes of the Clave as well. The Hanscoms lived in the manor just a mile or two from ours, and there were others close by—the Denbroughs, the Mayfields. It was like being at the center of the world, with all this activity swirling around us, all this passion, and through it all I was by Robert's side. He never made me feel dismissed or inconsequential. No, I was a key part of the Circle. I was one of the few whose opinions he trusted. He told me over and over that without me, he couldn't do any of it. Without me, he'd be nothing."

"He did?" Eddie couldn't imagine Pennywise saying anything like that, anything that made him sound...vulnerable.

“He did, but it wasn’t true. Robert could never have been nothing. He was born to be a leader, to be the center of a revolution. More and more converts came to him. They were drawn by his passion and the brilliance of his ideas. He rarely even spoke of Downworlders in those early days. It was all about reforming the Clave, changing laws that were ancient and rigid and wrong. Robert said there should be more Shadowhunters, more to fight the demons, more Institutes, that we should worry less about hiding and more about protecting the world from demonkind. That we should walk tall and proud in the world. It was seductive, his vision: a world full of Shadowhunters, where demons ran scared and mundanes, instead of believing we didn’t exist, thanked us for what we did for them. We were young; we thought *thanks* were important. We didn’t know.” Sonia took a deep breath, as if she were about to dive underwater. “Then I got pregnant.”

Eddie felt a cold prickle at the back of his neck and suddenly—he couldn’t have said why—he was no longer sure he wanted the truth from his mother, no longer sure he wanted to hear, again, how Pennywise had made Ben into a monster. “Mom...”

Sonia shook her head blindly. “You asked me why I never told you that you had a brother. This is why.” She took a ragged breath. “I was so happy when I found out. And Robert—he’d always wanted to be a father, he said. To train his son to be a warrior the way his father had trained him. ‘Or your daughter,’ I’d say, and he’d smile and say a daughter could be a warrior just as well as a boy, and he would be happy with either. I thought everything was perfect.

“And then Jim was bitten by a werewolf. They’ll tell you there’s a one in two chance that a bite will pass on lycanthropy. I think it’s more like three in four. I’ve rarely seen anyone escape the disease, and Jim was no exception. At the next full moon he Changed. He was there on our doorstep in the morning, covered in blood, his clothes torn to rags. I wanted to comfort him, but Robert shoved me aside. ‘Sonia,’ he said, ‘the baby. ’ As if Jim were about to run at me and tear the baby out of my stomach. It was Jim, but Robert pushed me away and dragged Jim down the steps and into the woods. When he came back much later, he was alone. I ran to him, but he told me that Jim had killed himself in despair over his lycanthropy. That he was...

dead.”

The grief in Sonia’s voice was raw and ragged, Eddie thought, even now, when she knew Jim hadn’t died. But Eddie remembered his own despair when he’d held Stan as he’d died on the steps of the Institute. There were some feelings you never forgot.

“But he gave Jim a knife,” Eddie said in a small voice. “He told him to kill himself. He made Amatis’s husband divorce her, just because her brother had become a werewolf.”

“I didn’t know,” Sonia said. “After Jim died, it was like I fell into a black pit. I spent months in my bedroom, sleeping all the time, eating only because of the baby. Mundanes would call what I had depression, but Shadowhunters don’t have those kinds of terms. Robert believed I was having a difficult pregnancy. He told everyone I was ill. I *was* ill—I couldn’t sleep. I kept thinking I heard strange noises, cries in the night. Robert gave me sleeping drafts, but those just gave me nightmares. Terrible dreams that Robert was holding me down, was forcing a knife into me, or that I was choking on poison. In the morning I’d be exhausted, and I’d sleep all day. I had no idea what was going on outside, no idea that he’d forced Will to divorce Amatis and marry Holly. I was in a daze. And then...” Sonia knotted her hands together in her lap. They were shaking. “And then I had the baby.”

She fell silent, for so long that Eddie wondered if she was going to speak again. Sonia was staring sightlessly toward the demon towers, her fingers beating a nervous tattoo against her knees. At last she said, “My mother was with me when the baby was born. You never knew her. Your grandmother. She was such a kind woman. You would have liked her, I think. She handed me my son, and at first I knew only that he fit perfectly into my arms, that the blanket wrapping him was soft, and that he was so small and delicate, with just a wisp of fair hair on the top of his head. And then he opened his eyes.” Sonia’s voice was flat, almost toneless, yet Eddie found himself shivering, dreading what his mother might say next. *Don’t*, he wanted to say. *Don’t tell me*. But Sonia went on, the words pouring out of her like cold poison.

“Horror washed over me. It was like being bathed in acid—my skin

seemed to burn off my bones, and it was all I could do not to drop the baby and begin screaming. They say every mother knows her own child instinctively. I suppose the opposite is true as well. Every nerve in my body was crying out that this was not my baby, that it was something horrible and unnatural, as inhuman as a parasite. How could my mother not see it? But she was smiling at me as if nothing were wrong. “His name is Jonathan,” said a voice from the doorway. I looked up and saw Robert regarding the scene before him with a look of pleasure. The baby opened his eyes again, as if recognizing the sound of his name. His eyes were black, black as night, fathomless as tunnels dug into his skull. There was nothing human in them at all.”

There was a long silence. Eddie sat frozen, staring at his mother in openmouthed horror. *That’s Ben she’s talking about*, he thought. *Ben when he was a baby. How could you feel like that about a baby?*

“Mom,” he whispered. “Maybe—maybe you were in shock or something. Or maybe you were sick—”

“That’s what Robert told me,” Sonia said emotionlessly. “That I was sick. Robert adored Jonathan. He couldn’t understand what was wrong with me. And I knew he was right. I was a monster, a mother who couldn’t stand her own child. I thought about killing myself. I might have done it too—and then I got a message, delivered by fire-letter, from Kali Prasad. She was a warlock who had always been close to my family; she was the one we called on when we needed a healing spell, that sort of thing. She’d found out that Jim had become the leader of a pack of werewolves in the Brocelind Forest, by the eastern border. I burned the note once I got it. I knew Robert could never know. But it wasn’t until I went to the werewolf encampment and saw Jim that I knew for certain that Robert had lied to me, lied to me about Jim’s suicide. It was then that I started to truly hate him.”

“But Jim said you knew there was something wrong with Pennywise—that you knew he was doing something terrible. He said you knew it even before he was Changed.”

For a moment Sonia didn’t reply. “You know, Jim should never have been bitten. It shouldn’t have happened. It was a routine patrol of the

woods, he was out with Robert—it shouldn't have happened.”

“Mom...”

“Jim says I told him I was afraid of Robert even before he was Changed. He says I told him I could hear screams through the walls of the manor, that I suspected something, dreaded something. And Jim—trusting Jim—asked Robert about it the very next day. That night Robert took Jim hunting, and he was bitten. I think—I think Robert made me forget what I'd seen, whatever had made me afraid. He made me believe it was all bad dreams. And I think he made sure Jim got bitten that night. I think he wanted Jim out of the way so no one could remind me that I was afraid of my husband. But I didn't realize that, not right away. Jim and I saw each other so briefly that first day, and I wanted so badly to tell him about Jonathan, but I couldn't, I couldn't. Jonathan was my son. Still, seeing Jim, even just seeing him, made me stronger. I went home telling myself that I would make a new effort with Jonathan, would learn to love him. Would make myself love him.

“That night I was woken by the sound of a baby crying. I sat bolt upright, alone in the bedroom. Robert was out at a Circle meeting, so I had no one to share my amazement with. Jonathan, you see, never cried—never made a noise. His silence was one of the things that most upset me about him. I dashed down the hall to his room, but he was sleeping silently. Still, I could hear a baby crying, I was sure of it. I raced down the stairs, following the sound of the crying. It seemed to be coming from inside the empty wine cellar, but the door was locked, the cellar never used. But I had grown up in the manor. I knew where my father hid the key....”

Sonia didn't look at Eddie as she spoke; she seemed lost in the story, in her memories. “I never told you the story of Bluebeard's wife, did I, when you were a little boy? The husband told his wife never to look in the locked room, and she looked, and found the remains of all the wives he had murdered before her, displayed like butterflies in a glass case. I had no idea when I unlocked that door what I would find inside. If I had to do it again, would I be able to bring myself to open the door, to use my witchlight to guide me down into the darkness? I don't know, Eddie. I just don't know.

“The smell—oh, the smell down there, like blood and death and rot. Robert had hollowed out a place under the ground, in what had once been the wine cellar. It wasn’t a child I had heard crying, after all. There were cells down there now, with things imprisoned in them. Demon-creatures, bound with electrum chains, writhed and flopped and gurgled in their cells, but there was more, much more—the bodies of Downworlders, in different stages of death and dying. There were werewolves, their bodies half-dissolved by silver powder. Vampires held head-down in holy water until their skin peeled off the bones. Faeries whose skin had been pierced with cold iron.

“Even now I don’t think of him as a torturer. Not really. He seemed to be pursuing an almost scientific end. There were ledgers of notes by each cell door, meticulous recordings of his experiments, how long it had taken each creature to die. There was one vampire whose skin he had burned off over and over again to see if there was a point beyond which the poor creature could no longer regenerate. It was hard to read what he had written without wanting to faint, or throw up. Somehow I did neither.

“There was one page devoted to experiments he had done on himself. He had read somewhere that the blood of demons might act as an amplifier of the powers Shadowhunters are naturally born with. He had tried injecting himself with the blood, to no end. Nothing had happened except that he had made himself sick. Eventually he came to the conclusion that he was too old for the blood to affect him, that it must be given to a child to take full effect—preferably one as yet unborn.

“Across from the page recording those particular conclusions he had written a series of notes with a heading I recognized. My name. *Sonia Gray*.

“I remember the way my fingers shook while I turned the pages, the words burning themselves into my brain. *‘Sonia drank the mixture again tonight. No visible changes in her, but again it is the child that concerns me.... With regular infusions of demonic ichor such as I have been giving her, the child may be capable of any feats.... Last night I heard the child’s heart beat, more strongly than any human heart, the sound like a mighty bell, tolling the beginning of a new generation of Shadowhunters, the blood of angels and demons mixed to produce powers*

beyond any previously imagined possible.... No longer will the power of Downworlders be the greatest on this earth....'

"There was more, much more. I clawed at the pages, my fingers trembling, my mind racing back, seeing the mixtures Robert had given me to drink each night, the nightmares about being stabbed, choked, poisoned. But I wasn't the one he'd been poisoning. It was Jonathan. Jonathan, whom he'd turned into some kind of half-demon thing. And that, Eddie—*that* was when I realized what Robert really was."

Eddie let out the breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding. It was horrible—so horrible—and yet it all matched up with the vision Ithuriel had showed him. He wasn't sure whom he felt more pity for, his mother or Jonathan. Jonathan—he couldn't think of him as Ben, not with his mother there, not with the story so fresh in his mind—doomed to be not quite human by a father who'd cared more about murdering Downworlders than he had about his own family.

"But—you didn't leave then, did you?" Eddie asked, her voice sounding small to her ears. "You stayed...."

"For two reasons," Sonia said. "One was the Uprising. What I found in the cellar that night was like a slap in the face. It woke me up out of my misery and made me see what was going on around me. Once I realized what Robert was planning—the wholesale slaughter of Downworlders—I knew I couldn't let it happen. I began meeting in secret with Jim. I couldn't tell him what Robert had done to me and to our child. I knew it would just drive him mad, that he'd be unable to stop himself from trying to hunt down Robert and kill him, and he'd only get himself killed in the process. And I couldn't let anyone else know what had been done to Jonathan either. Despite everything, he was still my child. But I did tell Jim about the horrors in the cellar, of my conviction that Robert was losing his mind, becoming progressively more insane. Together, we planned to thwart the Uprising. I felt driven to do it, Eddie. It was a sort of expiation, the only way I could make myself feel like I had paid for the sin of ever having joined the Circle, of having trusted Robert. Of having loved him."

"And he didn't know? Robert, I mean. He didn't figure out what you

were doing?”

Sonia shook her head. “When people love you, they trust you. Besides, at home I tried to pretend everything was normal. I behaved as though my initial revulsion at the sight of Jonathan was gone. I would bring him over to Sharon Denbrough's house, let him play with her baby son, Bill. Sometimes Holly Wheeler would join us—she was pregnant by that time. ‘Your husband is so kind,’ she would tell me. ‘He is so concerned about Will and me. He gives me potions and mixtures for the health of the baby; they are wonderful.’”

“Oh,” said Eddie. “Oh my God.”

“That’s what I thought,” said Sonia grimly. “I wanted to tell her not to trust Robert or to accept anything he gave her, but I couldn’t. Her husband was Robert's closest friend, and she would have betrayed me to him immediately. I kept my mouth shut. And then—”

“She killed herself,” said Eddie, remembering the story. “But—was it because of what Pennywise did to her?”

Sonia shook her head. “I honestly don’t think so. Will was killed in a raid, and she slit her wrists when she found out the news. She was eight months pregnant. She bled to death....” She paused. “Keene was the one who found her body. And Robert actually did seem distraught over their deaths. He vanished for almost an entire day afterward, and came home bleary-eyed and staggering. And yet in a way, I was almost grateful for his distraction. At least it meant he wasn’t paying attention to what I was doing. Every day I became more and more frightened that Pennywise would discover the conspiracy and try to torture the truth out of me: Who was in our secret alliance? How much had I betrayed of his plans? I wondered how I would withstand torture, whether I could hold up against it. I was terribly afraid that I couldn’t. I resolved finally to take steps to make sure that this never happened. I went to Prasad with my fears and she created a potion for me—”

“The potion from the Book of the White,” Eddie said, realizing. “That’s why you wanted it. And the antidote—how did it wind up in the Hanscoms’ library?”

"I hid it there one night during a party," Sonia said with the trace of a smile. "I didn't want to tell Jim—I knew he'd hate the whole idea of the potion, but everyone else I knew was in the Circle. I sent a message to Kali, but she was leaving Derry and wouldn't say when she'd be back. She said she could always be reached with a message—but who would send it? Eventually I realized there was one person I could tell, one person who hated Robert enough that she'd never betray me to him. I sent a letter to Rena explaining what I planned to do and that the only way to revive me was to find Kali Prasad. I never heard a word back from her, but I had to believe she had read it and understood. It was all I had to hold on to."

"Two reasons," Eddie said. "You said there were two reasons that you stayed. One was the Uprising. What was the other?"

Sonia's green eyes were tired, but luminous and wide. "Eddie" she said, "can't you guess? The second reason is that I was pregnant again. Pregnant with *you*."

"Oh," Eddie said in a small voice. He remembered Jim saying, *She was carrying another child, and had known it for weeks*. "But didn't that make you want to run away even more?"

"Yes," Sonia said. "But I knew I couldn't. If I'd run away from Robert, he would have moved heaven and hell to get me back. He would have followed me to the ends of the earth, because I belonged to him and he would never have let me go. And maybe I would have let him come after me, and taken my chances, but I would never have let him come after you." She pushed her hair back from her tired-looking face. "There was only one way I could make sure he never did. And that was for him to die."

Eddie looked at his mother in surprise. Sonia still looked tired, but her face was shining with a fierce light.

"I thought he'd be killed during the Uprising," she said. "I couldn't have killed him myself. I couldn't have brought myself to, somehow. But I never thought he'd survive the battle. And later, when the house burned, I wanted to believe he was dead. I told myself over and over that he and Jonathan had burned to death in the fire. But I knew ..." Her voice trailed off. "It was why I did what I did. I thought

it was the only way to protect you—taking your memories, making you into as much of a mundane as I could. Hiding you in the mundane world. It was stupid, I realize that now, stupid and wrong. And I'm sorry, Eddie. I just hope you can forgive me—if not now, then in the future.”

“Mom.” Eddie cleared his throat. He'd felt like he was about to cry for pretty much the last ten minutes. “It's okay. It's just—there's one thing I don't get.” He knotted his fingers into the material of his coat. “I mean, I knew already a little of what Pennywise did to Ben—I mean, to Jonathan. But the way you describe Jonathan, it's like he was a monster. And, Mom, Ben isn't like that. He's nothing like that. If you knew him—if you could just meet him—”

“Eddie.” Sonia reached out and took Eddie's hand in hers. “There's more that I have to tell you. There's nothing more that I hid from you, or lied about. But there are things I never knew, things I only just discovered. And they may be very hard to hear.”

Worse than what you've already told me? Eddie thought. He bit his lip and nodded. “Go ahead and tell me. I'd rather know.”

“When Dorothea told me that Robert had been sighted in the city, I knew he was there for me—for the Cup. I wanted to flee, but I couldn't bring myself to tell you why. I don't blame you at all for running from me that awful night, Eddie. I was just glad you weren't there when your father—when Robert and his demons broke into our apartment. I just had time to swallow the potion—I could hear them breaking the door down ...” She trailed off, her voice tight. “I hoped Robert would leave me for dead, but he didn't. He brought me to Renwick's with him. He tried various methods to wake me up, but nothing worked. I was in a sort of dream state; I was half-conscious that he was there, but I couldn't move or respond to him. I doubt he thought I could hear or understand him. And yet he would sit by the bed while I slept and talk to me.”

“Talk to you? About what?”

“About our past. Our marriage. How he had loved me and I had betrayed him. How he hadn't loved anyone since. I think he meant it too, as much as he could mean these things. I had always been the

one he'd talked to about the doubts he had, the guilt he felt, and in the years since I'd left him I don't think there'd ever been anyone else. I think he couldn't stop himself from talking to me, even though he knew he shouldn't. I think he just wanted to talk to someone. You'd have thought that what was on his mind would be what he'd done to those poor people, making them Forsaken, and what he was planning to do to the Clave. But it wasn't. What he wanted to talk about was Jonathan."

"What about him?"

Sonia's mouth tightened. "He wanted to tell me he was sorry for what he'd done to Jonathan before he'd been born, because he knew it had nearly destroyed me. He'd known I was close to suicide over Jonathan—though he didn't know I was also despairing over what I'd discovered about him. He'd somehow gotten hold of angel blood. It's an almost legendary substance for Shadowhunters. Drinking it is supposed to give you incredible strength. Robert had tried it on himself and discovered that it gave him not just increased strength but a feeling of euphoria and happiness every time he injected it into his blood. So he took some, dried it to powder, and mixed it into my food, hoping it would help my despair."

I know where he got hold of angel blood, Eddie thought, thinking of Itthuriel with a sharp sadness. "Do you think it worked at all?"

"I do wonder now if that was why I suddenly found the focus and the ability to go on, and to help Jim thwart the Uprising. It would be ironic if that was the case, considering why Robert did it in the first place. But what he didn't know was that while he was doing this, I was pregnant with you. So while it may have affected me slightly, it affected you much more. I believe that's why you can do what you can with runes."

"And maybe," Eddie said, "why you can do things like trap the image of the Mortal Cup in a tarot card. And why Pennywise can do the things like take the cure off Keene."

"Robert has had years of experimenting on himself in a myriad of ways," said Sonia. "He's as close now as a human being, a Shadowhunter, can get to a warlock. But nothing he can do to

himself would have the kind of profound effect on him it would have on you or Jonathan, because you were so young. I'm not sure anyone's ever before done what Robert did, not to a baby before it was born."

"So Ben—Jonathan—and I really were both experiments."

"You were an unintentional one. With Jonathan, Robert wanted to create some kind of superwarrior, stronger and faster and better than other Shadowhunters. At Renwick's, Robert told me that Jonathan really was all those things. But that he was also cruel and amoral and strangely empty. Jonathan was loyal enough to Robert, but I suppose Robert realized that somewhere along the way, in trying to create a child who was superior to others, he'd created a son who could never really love him."

Eddie thought of Ben, of the way he'd looked at Renwick's, the way he'd clutched that piece of the broken Portal so hard that blood had run down his fingers. "No," he said. "No and no. Ben is not like that. He does love Pennywise. He shouldn't, but he does. And he isn't empty. He's the opposite of everything you're saying."

Sonia's hands twisted in her lap. They were laced all over with fine white scars—the fine white scars all Shadowhunters bore, the memory of vanished Marks. But Eddie had never really seen his mother's scars before. Eleven's magic had always made him forget them. There was one, on the inside of his mother's wrist, that was very like the shape of a star....

His mother spoke then, and all thoughts of anything else fled from Eddie's mind.

"I am not," Sonia said, "talking about Ben."

25. Love is a Devil

Notes for the Chapter:

Five chapters left :"(

Everything seemed to be happening very slowly, as if Eddie were dreaming. *Maybe I am dreaming*, he thought. *Maybe my mother never woke up at all, and all of this is a dream.* “Ben is Pennywise’s son. I mean, who else could he be?”

Sonia looked straight into her son’s eyes. “The night Holly Wheeler died, she was eight months pregnant. Robert had been giving her potions, powders—he was trying on her what he’d tried on himself, with Ithuriel’s blood, hoping that Will’s child would be as strong and powerful as he suspected Jonathan would be, but without Jonathan’s worse qualities. He couldn’t bear that his experiment would go to waste, so with Keene’s help he cut the baby out of Holly’s stomach. She’d only been dead a short time—”

Eddie made a gagging noise. “That isn’t possible.”

Sonia went on as if Eddie hadn’t spoken. “Robert took that baby and had Keene bring it to his own childhood home, in a valley not far from Lake Lyn. It was why he was gone all that night. Keene took care of the baby until the Uprising. After that, because Robert was pretending to be Daniel Hanscom, he moved the child to the Hanscom manor and raised him as Daniel Hanscom’s son.”

“So Ben,” Eddie whispered. “Ben is *not* my brother?”

He felt his mother squeeze his hand—a sympathetic squeeze. “No, Eddie. He’s not.”

Eddie’s vision darkened. He could feel his heart pounding in separate, distinct beats. His hands were shaking. “Then whose bones were those in the fire? Jim said there were a child’s bones—”

Sonia shook her head. “Those were Daniel Hanscom’s bones, and his son’s bones. Robert killed them both and burned their bodies. He

wanted the Clave to believe that both he and his son were dead.”

“Then Jonathan—”

“Is alive,” said Sonia, pain flashing across her face. “Robert told me as much at Renwick’s. Robert brought Ben up in the Hanscom manor, and Jonathan in the house near the lake. He managed to divide his time between the two of them, traveling from one house to the other, sometimes leaving one or both alone for long periods of time. It seems that Ben never knew about Jonathan, though Jonathan may have known about Ben. They never met, though they probably lived only miles from each other.”

“And Ben doesn’t have demon blood in him? He’s not—cursed?”

“Cursed?” Sonia looked surprised. “No, he doesn’t have demon blood. Eddie, Robert experimented on Ben when he was a baby with the same blood he used on me, on you. Angel blood. Ben isn’t cursed. The opposite, if anything. All Shadowhunters have some of the Angel’s blood in them—you two just have a bit more.”

Eddie’s mind whirled. He tried to imagine Pennywise raising two children at the same time, one part demon, one part angel. One shadow boy, and one light. Loving them both, perhaps, as much as Pennywise could love anything. Ben had never known about Jonathan, but what had the other boy known about him? His complementary part, his opposite? Had he hated the thought of him? Yearned to meet him? Been indifferent? They had both been so alone. And one of them was Eddie’s brother—her real, full-blooded brother. “Do you think he’s still the same? Jonathan, I mean? Do you think he could have gotten ... better?”

“I don’t think so,” Sonia said gently.

“But what makes you so sure?” Eddie spun to look at his mother, suddenly eager. “I mean, maybe he’s changed. It’s been years. Maybe —”

“Robert told me he had spent years teaching Jonathan how to appear pleasant, even charming. He wanted him to be a spy, and you can’t be a spy if you terrify everyone you meet. Jonathan even learned a

certain ability to cast slight glamours, to convince people he was likable and trustworthy.” Sonia sighed. “I’m telling you this so you won’t feel bad that you were taken in. Eddie, you’ve met Jonathan. He just never told you his real name, because he was posing as someone else. Henry Bowers.”

Eddie stared at his mother. *But he’s the Mayfields’ cousin*, part of his mind insisted, but of course Henry had never been who he’d claimed he was; everything he’d said had been a lie. Eddie thought of the way he’d felt the first time he’d seen him, as if he were recognizing someone he’d known all his life, someone as intimately familiar to him as his own self. He had never felt that way about Ben. “Henry’s my brother?”

Sonia’s fine-boned face was drawn, her hands laced together. Her fingertips were white, as if she was pressing them too hard against one another. “I spoke to Jim for a long time today about everything that’s happened in Alicante since you arrived. He told me about the demon towers, and his suspicion that Henry had destroyed the wards, though he had no idea how. I realized then who Henry really was.”

“You mean because he lied about being Henry Bowers? And because he’s a spy for Pennywise?”

“Those two things, yes,” said Sonia, “but it actually wasn’t until Jim said that you’d told him Henry dyed his hair that I guessed. And I could be wrong, but a boy just a little older than you, fair-haired and dark-eyed, with no apparent parents, utterly loyal to Robert—I couldn’t help but think he must be Jonathan. And there’s more than that. Robert was always trying to find a way to bring the wards down, always determined that there was a way to do it. Experimenting on Jonathan with demon blood—he said it was to make him stronger, a better fighter, but there was more to it than that—”

Eddie stared. “What do you mean, more to it?”

“It was his way of bringing down the wards,” Sonia said. “You can’t bring a demon into Alicante, but you need demons’ blood to take down the wards. Jonathan has demon blood; it’s in his veins. And his being a Shadowhunter means he’s granted automatic entrance to the

city whenever he wants to get in, no matter what. He used his own blood to take the wards down, I'm sure of it."

Eddie thought of Henry standing across from him in the grass near the ruins of the Henderson manor. The way his dark hair had blown across his face. The way he'd held Eddie's wrists, his nails digging into his skin. The way he'd said it was impossible that Pennywise had ever loved Ben. Eddie thought it was because he hated Pennywise. But it wasn't, he realized. He'd been ... jealous.

Eddie thought of the dark prince of his drawings, the one who had looked so much like Henry. He had dismissed the resemblance as coincidence, a trick of imagination, but now he wondered if it was the tie of their shared blood that had driven him to give the unhappy hero of his story his brother's face. He tried to visualize the prince again, but the image seemed to shatter and dissolve before his eyes, like ash blown away on the wind. He could only see Henry now, the red light of the burning city reflected in his eyes.

"Ben," Eddie said. "Someone has to tell him. Has to tell him the truth."

"I already did." his mother said.

Eddie frowned. "W-what? When?"

"Hours ago, after you left Amatis's house when you saw me, I spoke to him in private and told him everything."

"How did he...react?"

Sonia exhaled deeply. "He was angry and confused, but he understood, he told me I was so brave for coming back."

"But where is he?"

The double doors of the Hall swung open, spilling light out over the pillared arcade and the steps below it. The dull roar of voices, no longer muffled, rose as Jim came through the doors. He looked exhausted, but there was a lightness about him that hadn't been there before. He seemed almost relieved.

Sonia rose to her feet. “Jim. What is it?”

He took a few steps toward them, then paused between the doorway and the stairs. “Sonia,” he said, “I’m sorry to interrupt you.”

“That’s all right, Jim.” Even through his daze, Eddie thought, *Why do they keep saying each other’s names like that? There was a sort of awkwardness between them now, an awkwardness that hadn’t been there before. “Is something wrong?”*

He shook his head. “No. For a change, something’s right.” He smiled at Eddie and there was nothing awkward about it: He looked pleased with him, and even proud. “You did it, Eddie,” he said. “The Clave’s agreed to let you Mark them. There will be no surrender after all.”

The valley was more beautiful in reality than it had been in Richie’s vision. Maybe it was the bright moonlight silvering the river that cut across the green valley floor. White birch and aspen dotted the valley’s sides, shivering their leaves in the cool breeze—it was chilly up on the ridge, with no protection from the wind.

This was without a doubt the valley where he’d last seen Henry. Finally he was catching up. After securing Wayfarer to a tree, Richie took the bloody thread from his pocket and repeated the tracking ritual, just to be sure.

He closed his eyes, expecting to see Henry, hopefully somewhere very close by—maybe even still in the valley—

Instead he saw only darkness.

His heart began to pound.

He tried again, moving the thread to his left fist and awkwardly carving the tracking rune onto the back of it with his right, less agile, hand. He took a deep breath before closing his eyes this time.

Nothing, again. Just a wavering, shadowy blackness. He stood there for a full minute, his teeth gritted, the wind slicing through his jacket, making goose bumps rise on his skin. Eventually, cursing, he

opened his eyes—and then, in a fit of desperate anger, his fist; the wind picked up the thread and carried it away, so fast that even if he'd regretted it immediately he couldn't have caught it back.

His mind raced. Clearly the tracking rune was no longer working. Perhaps Henry had realized he was being followed and done something to break the charm—but what *could* you do to stop a tracking? Maybe he'd found a large body of water. Water disrupted magic.

Not that that helped Richie much. It wasn't as if he could go to every lake in the country and see if Henry was floating around in the middle of it. He'd been so close, too—so close. He'd seen this valley, seen Henry in it. And there the house was, just barely visible, nestled against a copse of trees on the valley floor. At least it would be worth going down to look around the house to see if there was anything that might point toward Henry's, or Pennywise's, location.

With a feeling of resignation, Richie used the stele to Mark himself with a number of fast-acting, fast-disappearing battle Marks: one to give him silence, and one swiftness, and another for sure-footed walking. When he was done—and feeling the familiar, stinging pain hot against his skin—he slid the stele into his pocket, gave Wayfarer a brisk pat on the neck, and headed down into the valley.

The sides of the valley were deceptively steep, and treacherous with loose scree. Richie alternated picking his way down it carefully and sliding on the scree, which was fast but dangerous. By the time he reached the valley floor, his hands were bloody where he'd fallen onto the loose gravel more than once. He washed them in the clear, fast-flowing stream; its water was numbingly cold.

When he straightened up and looked around, he realized he was now regarding the valley from a different angle than he had been in the tracking vision. There was the gnarled copse of trees, their branches intertwining, the valley walls rising all around, and there was the small house. Its windows were dark now, and no smoke rose out of the chimney. Richie felt a mingled stab of relief and disappointment. It would be easier to search the house if no one was in it. On the other hand, no one was in it.

As he approached, he wondered what about the house in the vision had seemed eerie. Up close, it was just an ordinary Derry farmhouse, made of squares of white and gray stone. The shutters had once been painted a bright blue, but it looked as if it had been years since anyone had repainted them. They were pale and peeling with age.

Reaching one of the windows, Richie hoisted himself onto the sill and peered through the cloudy pane. He saw a big, slightly dusty room with a workbench of sorts running along one wall. The tools on it weren't anything you'd do handiwork with—they were a warlock's tools: stacks of smeared parchment; black, waxy candles; fat copper bowls with dried dark liquid stuck to the rims; an assortment of knives, some as thin as awls, some with wide square blades. A pentagram was chalked on the floor, its outlines blurred, each of its five points decorated with a different rune. Richie's stomach tightened—the runes looked like the ones that had been carved around Ithuriel's feet. Could Pennywise have done this—could these be his things?

Richie slid off the sill, landing in a dry patch of grass—just as a shadow passed across the face of the moon. But there were no birds here, he thought, and glanced up just in time to see a raven wheeling overhead. He froze, then stepped hastily into the shadow of a tree and peered up through its branches. As the raven dipped closer to the ground, Richie knew his first instinct had been right. This wasn't just any raven—this was Gard, the raven that had once been Keene's; Kenne had used him on occasion to carry messages outside the Institute. Since then Richie had learned that Gard had originally been Pennywise's.

Richie pressed himself closer to the tree trunk. His heart was pounding again, this time with excitement. If Gard was here, it could only mean that he was carrying a message, and this time the message wouldn't be for Keene. It would be for Pennywise. It had to be. If Richie could only manage to follow him—

Perching on a sill, Gard peered through one of the house's windows. Apparently realizing that the house was empty, the bird rose into the air with an irritable caw and flapped off in the direction of the stream.

Richie stepped out from the shadows and set out in pursuit of the raven.

“So, wait,” Stan said, “you *kissed* your brother?”

“Stan!” Eddie was appalled. “Shut UP.” He spun in his seat to see if anyone was listening, but, fortunately, nobody seemed to be. He was sitting in a high seat on the dais in the Accords Hall, Stan by his side, and Beverly on the other. His mother stood at the edge of the dais, leaning down to speak to Amatis.

All around them the Hall was chaos as the Downworlders who had come from the North Gate poured in, spilling in through the doors, crowding against the walls. Eddie recognized various members of Jim's pack, including Mike, who grinned across the room at him. There were faeries, pale and cold and lovely as icicles, and warlocks with bat wings and goat feet and even one with antlers, blue fire sparking from their fingertips as they moved through the room. The Shadowhunters milled among them, looking nervous.

Clutching his stele in both hands, Eddie looked around anxiously. Where was Jim? He'd vanished into the crowd. Eddie picked him out after a moment, talking with Malachi, who was shaking his head violently. Amatis stood nearby, shooting the Consul dagger glances.

“Don't make me sorry I ever told you any of this, Stan,” Eddie said, glaring at him. He'd done his best to give his friends a pared-down version of Sonia's tale, mostly hissed under his breath as they'd helped him plow through the crowds to the dais and take his seat there. It was weird being up here, looking down on the room as if he were the king of all she surveyed. But a king wouldn't be nearly so panicked. “Besides. He was a horrible kisser.”

“Or maybe it was just gross, because he was, you know, *your brother*.” Beverly seemed more amused by the whole business than Eddie thought she had any right to be.

“Do *not* say that where my mother can hear you, or I'll kill you,” he said with a second glare. “I already feel like I'm going to throw up or

pass out. Don't make it worse."

Sonia, returning from the edge of the dais in time to hear Eddie's last words—though, fortunately, not what he and his friends had been discussing—dropped a reassuring pat onto Eddie's shoulder. "Don't be nervous, baby. You were so great before. Is there anything you need? A blanket, some hot water ..."

"I'm not cold," Eddie said patiently, "and I don't need a bath, either. I'm fine. I just want Jim to come up here and tell me what's going on."

Sonia waved toward Jim to get his attention, silently mouthing something Eddie couldn't quite decipher. "Mom," he spat, "don't," but it was already too late. Jim glanced up—and so did quite a few of the other Shadowhunters. Most of them looked away just as quickly, but Eddie sensed the fascination in their stares. It was weird thinking that his mother was something of a legendary figure here. Just about everyone in the room had heard her name and had some kind of opinion about her, good or bad. Eddie wondered how his mother kept it from bothering her. She didn't look bothered—she looked cool and collected and dangerous.

A moment later Jim had joined them on the dais, Amatis at his side. He still looked tired, but also alert and even a little excited. He said, "Just hang on a second. Everyone's coming."

"Malachi," said Sonia, not quite looking directly at Jim while she spoke, "was he giving you trouble?"

Jim made a dismissive gesture. "He thinks we should send a message to Robert, refusing his terms. I say we shouldn't tip our hand. Let Robert show up with his army on Brocelind Plain expecting a surrender. Malachi seemed to think that wouldn't be sporting, and when I told him war wasn't an English schoolboy cricket game, he said that if any of the Downworlders here got out of hand, he'd step in and end the whole business. I don't know what he thinks is going to happen—as if Downworlders can't stop fighting even for five minutes."

"That's exactly what he thinks," said Amatis. "It's Malachi. He's

probably worried you'll start eating each other."

"Amatis," Jim said. "Someone might hear you." He turned, then, as two people mounted the steps behind him. One was a tall, slender faerie knight with long dark hair that fell in sheets on either side of his narrow face. He wore a tunic of white armor: pale, hard metal made of tiny overlapping circles, like the scales of a fish. His eyes were leaf green.

The other was Jane Ives. She didn't smile at Eddie as she came to stand beside Jim. She wore a long, dark coat buttoned up to the throat, and her hair was pulled back from her face.

"You look so *plain*," Eddie said, staring.

Jane smiled faintly. "I heard you had a rune to show us," was all she said.

Eddie looked at Jim, who nodded. "Oh, yes," he said. "I just need something to write on—some paper."

"I asked you if you needed anything," Sonia said under her breath, sounding very much like the mother Eddie remembered.

"I've got paper," said Stan, fishing something out of his jeans pocket. He handed it to Eddie. It was a crumpled flyer for his band's performance at the Knitting Factory in July. Eddie shrugged and flipped it over, raising his borrowed stele. It sparked slightly when he touched the tip to the paper, and he worried for a moment that the flyer might burn, but the tiny flame subsided. He set to drawing, doing her best to shut everything else out: the noise of the crowd, the feeling that everyone was staring at him.

The rune came out as it had before—a pattern of lines that curved strongly into one another, then stretched across the page as if expecting a completion that wasn't there. He brushed dust from the page and held it up, feeling absurdly as if he were in school and showing off some sort of presentation to his class. "This is the rune," he said. "It requires a second rune to complete it, to work properly. A —partner rune."

“One Downworlder, one Shadowhunter. Each half of the partnership has to be Marked,” Jim said. He scribbled a copy of the rune on the bottom of the page, tore the paper in half, and handed one illustration to Amatis. “Start circulating the rune,” he said. “Show the Nephilim how it works.”

With a nod Amatis vanished down the steps and into the crowd. The faerie knight, glancing after her, shook his head. “I have always been told that only the Nephilim can bear the Angel’s Marks,” he said, with a measure of distrust. “That others of us will run mad, or die, should we wear them.”

“This isn’t one of the Angel’s Marks,” said Eddie. “It’s not from the Gray Book. It’s safe, I promise.”

The faerie knight looked unimpressed.

With a sigh Eleven flipped her sleeve back and reached a hand out to Eddie. “Go ahead.”

“I can’t,” he said. “The Shadowhunter who Marks you will be your partner, and I’m not fighting in the battle.”

“I should hope not,” said Eleven. She glanced over at Jim and Sonia, who were standing close together. “You two,” she said. “Go on, then. Show the faerie how it works.”

Sonia blinked in surprise. “What?”

“I assumed,” Eleven said, “that you two would be partners, since you’re practically married anyway.”

Color flooded up into Sonia’s face, and she carefully avoided looking at Jim. “I don’t have a stele—”

“Take mine.” Eddie handed it over. “Go ahead, show them.”

Sonia turned to Jim, who seemed entirely taken aback. He thrust out his hand before she could ask for it, and she Marked his palm with a hasty precision. His hand shook as she drew, and she took his wrist to steady it; Jim looked down at her as she worked, and Eddie thought of their conversation about his mother and what Jim had told him

about his feelings for Sonia, and Eddie felt a pang of sadness. He wondered if his mother even knew that Jim loved her, and if she knew, what she would say.

“There.” Sonia drew the stele back. “Done.”

Jim raised his hand, palm out, and showed the swirling black Mark in its center to the faerie knight. “Is that satisfactory, Meliorn?”

“Meliorn?” said Eddie. “I’ve met you, haven’t I? You used to go out with Richard Tozier .”

Meliorn was almost expressionless, but Eddie could have sworn he looked ever so slightly uncomfortable. Jim shook his head. “Eddie, Meliorn is a knight of the Seelie Court. It’s very unlikely that he—”

“He was totally hooking up with Richie,” Stan said.

Meliorn blinked at him. “You,” he said with distaste, “you are the chosen representative of the Night Children?”

Stan shook his head. “No. I’m just here for him.” He pointed at Eddie.

“The Night Children,” said Jim, after a brief hesitation, “aren’t participating, Meliorn. I did convey that information to your Lady. They’ve chosen to—to go their own way.”

Meliorn’s delicate features drew down into a scowl. “Would that I had known that,” he said. “The Night Children are a wise and careful people. Any scheme that draws their ire draws my suspicions.”

“I didn’t say anything about ire,” Jim began, with a mixture of deliberate calm and faint exasperation—Eddie doubted that anyone who didn’t know him well would know he was irritated at all. He could sense the shift in his attention: Jim was looking down toward the crowd. Following his gaze, Eddie saw a familiar figure cut a path across the room—Ben, his whip wrapped around his wrist like a series of golden bracelets.

Eddie caught Beverly’s wrist. “The *Denbroughs*. I just saw Ben.”

She glanced toward the crowd, frowning. “I didn’t realize you were

looking for them.”

“Please go talk to them for me,” he whispered, glancing over to see if anyone was paying attention to them; nobody was. Jim was gesturing toward someone in the crowd; meanwhile, Sonia was saying something to Meliorn, who was looking at her with something approaching alarm. “I have to stay here, but—please, I need you to tell them to come and talk to me as soon as they can. Please, Bev.”

“All right.” She went down the steps and vanished into the throng.

When he turned back, he saw that Eleven was looking at him, her mouth set in a crooked line. “It’s fine,” she said, obviously answering whatever question Jim had just asked her. “I’m familiar with Brocelind Plain. I’ll set the Portal up in the square. One that big won’t last very long, though, so you’d better get everyone through it pretty quickly once they’re Marked.”

As Jim nodded and turned to say something to Sonia, Eddie leaned forward and said quietly, “Thanks, by the way. For everything you did for my mom.”

Eleven's uneven smile broadened. “You didn’t think I was going to do it, did you?”

“I wondered,” Eddie admitted. “Especially considering that when I saw you at the cottage, you didn’t even see fit to tell me that Richie brought Stan through the Portal with him when he came to Alicante. I didn’t have a chance to yell at you about that before, but what were you thinking? That I wouldn’t be interested?”

“That you’d be too interested,” said Eleven. “That you’d drop everything and go rushing off to the Gard. And I needed you to look for the Book of the White.”

“That’s ruthless,” Eddie said angrily. “And you’re wrong. I would have—”

“Done what anyone would have done. What I would have done if it were someone *I* cared about. I don’t blame you, Eddie, and I didn’t do it because I thought you were weak. I did it because you’re human,

and I know humanity's ways. I've been alive a long time."

"Like you never do anything stupid because you have feelings," Eddie said. "You never told me if you ever loved someone."

Eleven seemed to wince. "I did, a long time ago."

"And what happened to him—or her?"

She gave a loud sigh. "The reason why I seem to dislike Richie so much it's because...I don't want to hate him at all."

Eddie's eyes were wide. "Are you in love with *Richie*?"

Eleven stared at him, then she laughed, it was strange. Not her laugh, but the fact that Eddie had never heard her laugh before gave him shivers. "Of course not. But I understand your attraction to him."

Eddie felt himself flush. "I—"

"Don't even try. I was born centuries ago." She said. "Those golden eyes and the freckles and the black hair and that smile that captivates you instantly, making you feel like nothing is more important. That's how Mike made me feel."

Eddie frowned. He didn't think she was talking about Mike Hanlon, so he opted for other name he remembered. "Mike Wheeler?"

Eleven flinched and gave a gasp. "How do you know of him?"

"Jim told me. He was Richie's uncle and Will Byers's *parabatai*, wasn't he? I'm so sorry for what happened."

Eleven looked down. "It was a long time ago."

"A love like that doesn't just vanish instantly." Eddie tried to comfort her. "Did you really love him?"

"More than you can think of." She said. "But it was doomed from the start."

"Why?" Eddie was interested, he had never seen such a vulnerable

side of Eleven before. He wondered if Richie thought of him that way.

“Back in those times, Shadowhunters and Downworlders being lovers was a felony, a crime. It still is now, but less than before.”

Eddie shook his head slowly. “It sucks to suffer because of love.”

“It does,” she said. “at that,”

26. Hail and Farewell

The raven flew in slow, lazy circles, making his way over the treetops toward the western wall of the valley. The moon was high, eliminating the need for witchlight as Richie followed, keeping to the edges of the trees.

The valley wall rose above, a sheer wall of gray rock. The raven's path seemed to be following the curve of the stream as it wended its way west, disappearing finally into a narrow fissure in the wall. Richie nearly twisted his ankle several times on wet rock and wished he could swear out loud, but Gard would be sure to hear him. Bent into an uncomfortable half crouch, he concentrated on not breaking a leg instead.

His shirt was soaked with sweat by the time he reached the edge of the valley. For a moment he thought he'd lost sight of Gard, and his heart fell—then he saw the black sinking shape as the raven swooped low and disappeared into the dark, fissured hole in the valley's rock wall. Richie ran forward—it was such a relief to run instead of crawl. As he neared the fissure, he could see a much larger, darker gap beyond it—a cave. Fumbling his witchlight stone out of his pocket, Richie dived in after the raven.

Only a little light seeped in through the cave's mouth, and after a few steps even that was swallowed up by the oppressive darkness. Richie raised his witchlight and let the illumination bleed out between his fingers.

At first he thought he'd somehow found his way outside again, and that the stars were visible overhead in all their glittering glory. The stars never shone anywhere else the way they shone in Idris—and they weren't shining now. The witchlight had picked out dozens of sparkling deposits of mica in the rock around him, and the walls had come alive with brilliant points of light.

They showed him that he was standing in a narrow space carved out of sheer rock, the cave entrance behind him, two branching dark tunnels ahead. Richie thought of the stories his father had told him about heroes lost in mazes who used rope or twine to find their way

back. He didn't have either of those on him, though. He moved closer to the tunnels and stood silent for a long moment, listening. He heard the drip of water, faintly, from somewhere far away; the rush of the stream; a rustling like wings; and—voices.

He jerked back. The voices were coming from the left-hand tunnel, he was sure of it. He ran his thumb over the witchlight to dim it, until it was giving off a faint glow that was just enough to light his way. Then he plunged forward into the darkness.

For the sixth time, Eddie scanned the crowd, looking for Stan. He couldn't find him. The room was a roiling mass of Shadowhunters and Downworlders, the crowd spilling through the open doors and onto the steps outside. Everywhere was the flash of steles as Downworlders and Shadowhunters came together in pairs and Marked each other. Eddie saw Sharon Denbrough holding out her hand to a tall green-skinned faerie woman who was just as pale and regal as she was. Neil Mayfield was solemnly exchanging Marks with a warlock whose hair shone with blue sparks. Through the Hall doors Eddie could see the bright glimmer of the Portal in the square. The starlight shining down through the glass skylight lent a surreal air to all of it.

"Amazing, isn't it?" Jim said. He stood at the edge of the dais, looking down over the room. "Shadowhunters and Downworlders, mingling together in the same room. Working together." He sounded awed. All Eddie could think was that he wished Richie were here to see what was happening. He couldn't put aside his fear for him, no matter how hard he tried. The idea that he might face down Pennywise, might risk his life because he thought he deserved it.

"Eddie," Sonia said, with a trace of amusement, "did you hear what I said?"

"I did," said Eddie. "and it is amazing, I know."

Sonia put her hand on top of Eddie's. "That's not what I was saying. Jim and I will both be fighting. I know you know that. You'll be staying here with Ben and the other children."

"I'm not a child."

"I know you're not, but you're too young to fight. And even if you weren't, you've never been trained."

"I don't want to just sit here and do nothing."

"Nothing?" Sonia said in amazement. "Eddie, none of this would be happening if it weren't for you. We wouldn't even have a chance to fight if it weren't for you. I'm so proud of you. I just wanted to tell you that even though Jim and I will be gone, we'll be coming back. Everything's going to be fine."

Eddie looked up at his mother. "Mom," he said. "Don't lie."

Sonia took a sharp breath and stood up, drawing her hand back. Before she could say anything, something caught Eddie's eye—a familiar face in the crowd. A slim, dark figure, moving purposefully toward them, slipping through the thronged Hall with deliberate and surprising ease—as if he could drift *through* the crowd, like smoke through the gaps in a fence.

And he *was*, Eddie realized, as he neared the dais. It was Adrian, dressed in the same white shirt and black pants Eddie had first seen him in. He had forgotten how slight Adrian was. He looked barely fourteen as he climbed the stairs, his thin face calm and angelic, like a choirboy mounting the steps to the chancel.

"Adrian." Jim's voice held amazement, mixed with relief. "I didn't think you were coming. Have the Night Children reconsidered joining us in fighting Pennywise? There's still a Council seat open for you, if you'd like to take it." He held a hand out to Adrian.

Adrian's clear and lovely eyes regarded him expressionlessly. "I cannot shake hands with you, werewolf." When Jim looked offended, he smiled, just enough to show the white tips of his fang teeth. "I am a Projection," he said, raising his hand so that they could all see how the light shone through it. "I can touch nothing."

"But—" Jim glanced up at the moonlight pouring through the roof. "Why—" He lowered his hand. "Well, I'm glad you're here. However

you choose to appear.”

Adrian shook his head. For a moment his eyes lingered on Eddie—a look he really didn’t like—and then he turned his gaze to Sonia, and his smile widened. “You,” he said, “Pennywise’s wife. Others of my kind, who fought with you at the Uprising, told me of you. I admit I never thought I would see you myself.”

Sonia inclined her head. “Many of the Night Children fought very bravely then. Does your presence here indicate that we might fight alongside each other once again?”

It was odd, Eddie thought, to hear his mother speak in that cool and formal way, and yet it seemed natural to Sonia. As natural in its way as sitting on the ground in ancient overalls, holding a paint-splattered brush.

“I hope so,” Adrian said, and his gaze brushed Eddie again, like the touch of a cold hand. “We have only one requirement, one simple—and small—request. If that is honored, the Night Children of many lands will happily go to battle at your side.”

“The Council seat,” said Jim. “Of course—it can be formalized, the documents drawn up within the hour—”

“Not,” said Adrian, “the Council seat. Something else.”

“Something—else?” Jim echoed blankly. “What is it? I assure you, if it’s in our power—”

“Oh, it is.” Adrian’s smile was blinding. “In fact, it is something that is within the walls of this Hall as we speak.” He turned and gestured gracefully toward the crowd. “It is the boy Stan that we want,” he said. “It is the Daylighter.”

The tunnel was long and twisting, switchbacking on itself over and over as if Richie were crawling through the entrails of an enormous monster. It smelled like wet rock and ashes and something else, something dank and odd that reminded Richie ever so slightly of the smell of the Bone City.

At last the tunnel opened out into a circular chamber. Huge stalactites, their surfaces as burnished as gems, hung down from a ridged, stony ceiling high above. The floor was as smooth as if it had been polished, alternating here and there with arcane patterns of gleaming inlaid stone. A series of rough stalagmites circled the chamber. In the very center of the room stood a single massive quartz stalagmite, rearing up from the floor like a gigantic fang, patterned here and there with a reddish design. Peering closer, Richie saw that the sides of the stalagmite were transparent, the reddish pattern the result of something swirling and moving inside it, like a glass test tube full of colored smoke.

High above, light filtered down from a circular hole in the stone, a natural skylight. The chamber had certainly been a product of design rather than accident—the intricate patterns tracing the floor made that much obvious—but who would have hollowed out such an enormous underground chamber, and why?

A sharp caw echoed through the room, sending a shock through Richie's nerves. He ducked behind a bulky stalagmite, dousing his witchlight, just as two figures emerged from the shadows at the far end of the room and moved toward him, their heads bent together in conversation. It was only when they reached the center of the room and the light struck them that he recognized them.

Henry.

And Pennywise.

Hoping to avoid the crowd, Stan took the long way back toward the dais, ducking behind the rows of pillars that lined the sides of the Hall. He kept his head down as he went, lost in thought. It seemed strange that Bill, only a year or two older than Ben, was heading off to fight in a war, and the rest of them were going to stay behind. And Ben seemed calm about it. No crying, no hysterics. It was as if he'd expected it. Maybe he had. Maybe they all had.

He was close to the dais steps when he glanced up and saw, to his surprise, Adrian standing across from Jim, looking his usual near-

expressionless self. Jim, on the other hand, looked agitated—he was shaking his head, his hands up in protest, and Sonia, beside him, looked outraged. Stan couldn't see Eddie's face—his back was to him—but he knew him well enough to recognize her tension just from the set of his shoulders.

Not wanting Adrian to see him, Stan ducked behind a pillar, listening. Even over the babble of the crowd, he was able to hear Jim's rising voice.

"It's out of the question," Jim was saying. "I can't believe you'd even ask."

"And I can't believe you would refuse." Adrian's voice was cool and clear, the sharp, still-high voice of a young boy. "It is such a small thing."

"It's not a *thing*," Eddie sounded angry. "It's Stan. He's a person."

"He's a vampire," said Adrian. "Which you seem to keep forgetting."

"Aren't you a vampire as well?" asked Sonia, her tone as freezing as it had been every time Eddie and Stan had ever gotten in trouble for doing something stupid. "Are you saying *your* life has no worth?"

Stan pressed himself back against the pillar. *What was going on?*

"My life has great worth," said Adrian, "being, unlike yours, eternal. There is no end to what I might accomplish, while there is a clear end where you are concerned. But that is not the issue. He is a vampire, one of my own, and I am asking for him back."

"You can't have him back," Eddie snapped. "You never had him in the first place. You were never even interested in him either, till you found out he could walk around in daylight—"

"Possibly," said Adrian, "but not for the reason you think." He cocked his head, his bright, soft eyes dark and darting as a bird's. "No vampire should have the power he has," he said, "just as no Shadowhunter should have the power that you and your brother do. For years we have been told that we are wrong and unnatural. But this—this is unnatural."

“Adrian.” Jim's tone was warning. “I don't know what you were hoping for. But there's no chance we'll let you hurt Stan.”

“But you will let Pennywise and his army of demons hurt all these people, your allies.” Adrian made a sweeping gesture that encompassed the room. “You will let them risk their lives at their own discretion but won't give Stan the same choice? Perhaps he would make a different one than you will.” He lowered his arm. “You know we will not fight with you otherwise. The Night Children will have no part in this day.”

“Then have no part in it,” said Jim. “I won't buy your cooperation with an innocent life. I'm not Pennywise.”

Adrian turned to Sonia. “What about you, Shadowhunter? Are you going to let this werewolf decide what's best for your people?”

Sonia was looking at Adrian as if he were a roach she'd found crawling across her clean kitchen floor. Very slowly she said, “If you lay one hand on Stan, vampire, I'll have you chopped up into tiny pieces and fed to my cat. Understand?”

Adrian's mouth tightened. “Very well,” he said. “When you lie dying on Brocelind Plain, you may ask yourself whether one life was truly worth so many.”

He vanished. Jim turned quickly to Eddie, but Stan was no longer watching them: He was looking down at his hands. He had thought they would be shaking, but they were as motionless as a corpse's. Very slowly, he closed them into fists.

Pennywise looked as he always had, a big man in modified Shadowhunter gear, his broad, thick shoulders at odds with his sharply planed, fine-featured face. He had the Mortal Sword strapped across his back along with a bulky satchel. He wore a wide belt with numerous weapons thrust through it: thick hunting daggers, narrow dirks, and skinning knives.

It was strange seeing him with Henry, who looked—different. He

wore gear as well, and a long silver-hilted sword strapped at his waist, but it wasn't what he was wearing that struck Richie as odd. It was his hair, no longer a cap of dark curls but fair, shining-fair, a sort of white-gold. It suited him, actually, better than the dark hair had; his skin no longer looked so startlingly pale. He must have dyed his hair to resemble the real Henry Bowers, and this was what he really looked like. A sour, roiling wave of hatred coursed through Richie, and it was all he could do to stay hidden behind the rock and not lunge forward to wrap his hands around Henry's throat.

Gard cawed again and swooped down to land on Pennywise's shoulder. An odd pang went through Richie, seeing the raven in the posture that had become so familiar to him over the years he'd known Gard. Gard had practically lived on the tutor's shoulder, and seeing him on Pennywise's felt oddly foreign, even wrong, despite everything Keene had done.

Pennywise reached up and stroked the bird's glossy feathers, nodding as if the two of them were deep in conversation. Henry watched, his pale eyebrows arched. "Any word from Alicante?" he said as Gard lifted himself from Pennywise's shoulder and soared into the air again, his wings brushing the gemlike tips of the stalactites.

"Nothing as comprehensible as I would like," Pennywise said. The sound of his voice, cool and unruffled as ever, went through Richie like an arrow. His hands twitched involuntarily and he pressed them hard against his sides, grateful for the bulk of the rock hiding him from view. "One thing is certain. The Clave is allying itself with Jimothy's force of Downworlders."

Henry frowned. "But Malachi said—"

"Malachi has failed." Pennywise's jaw was set.

To Richie's surprise, Henry moved forward and put a hand on Pennywise's arm. There was something about that touch—something intimate and confident—that made Richie's stomach feel as if it had been invaded by a nest of worms. "Are you upset?" Henry asked, and the same tone was in his voice, the same grotesque and peculiar assumption of closeness.

"The Clave is further gone than I had thought. I knew the Denbroughs were corrupted beyond hope, and that sort of corruption is contagious. It's why I tried to keep them from entering Derry. But for the rest to have so easily had their minds filled with Jimothy's poison, when he is not even Nephilim ..." Pennywise's disgust was plain, but he didn't move away from Henry, Richie saw with growing disbelief, didn't move to brush the boy's hand from his shoulder. "I am disappointed. I thought they would see reason. I would have preferred not to end things this way."

Henry looked amused. "I don't agree," he said. "Think of them, ready to do battle, riding out to glory, only to find that none of it matters. That their gesture is futile. Think of the looks on their faces." His mouth stretched into a grin.

"Jonathan." Pennywise sighed. "This is ugly necessity, nothing to take delight in."

Jonathan? Richie clutched at the rock, his hands suddenly slippery. Why would Pennywise call Henry by that name? Was it a mistake? But Henry didn't look surprised.

"Isn't it better if I enjoy what I'm doing?" Henry said. "I certainly enjoyed myself in Alicante. The Denbroughs were better company than you led me to believe. And as for Eddie—"

Just hearing Henry say Eddie's name made Richie's heart skip a sudden, painful beat.

"He wasn't at all like I thought he'd be," Henry went on petulantly. "He wasn't anything like me."

"There is no one else in the world like you, Jonathan. And as for Eddie, he has always been exactly like his mother."

"He won't admit what he really wants," Henry said. "Not yet. But he'll come around."

Pennywise raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean, come around?"

Henry grinned, a grin that filled Richie with an almost uncontrollable rage. He bit down hard on his lip, tasting blood. "Oh, you know,"

Henry said. "To our side. I can't wait. Tricking him was the most fun I've had in ages."

"You weren't supposed to be having fun. You were supposed to be finding out what it was he was looking for. And when he did find it—without you, I might add—you let him give it to a warlock. And then you failed to bring him with you when you left, despite the threat he poses to us. Not exactly a glorious success, Jonathan."

"I tried to bring him. They wouldn't let him out of their sight, and I couldn't exactly kidnap him in the middle of the Accords Hall." Henry sounded sulky. "Besides, I told you, he doesn't have any idea how to use that rune power of his. He's too naive to pose any danger —"

"Whatever the Clave is planning now, he's at the center of it," Pennywise said. "Gard says as much. He saw Edward there on the dais in the Accords Hall. If he can show the Clave his power ..."

Richie felt a flash of fear for Eddie, mixed with an odd sort of pride—of course he was at the center of things. That was his Eddie.

"Then they'll fight," said Henry. "Which is what we want, isn't it? Eddie doesn't matter. It's the battle that matters."

"You underestimate him, I think," Pennywise said quietly.

"I was watching him," said Henry. "If his power were as unlimited as you seem to think, he could have used it to get his little vampire friend out of his prison—or save that fool Keene when he was dying —"

"Power doesn't have to be unlimited to be deadly," Pennywise said. "And as for Keene, perhaps you might show a bit more reserve regarding his death, since you're the one who killed him."

"He was about to tell them about the Angel. I *had* to."

"You *wanted* to. You always do." Pennywise took a pair of heavy leather gloves from his pocket and drew them on slowly. "Perhaps he would have told them. Perhaps not. All those years he looked after Ben in the Institute and must have wondered what it was he was

raising. Keene was one of the few who knew there was more than one boy. I knew he wouldn't betray me—he was too much of a coward for that.” He flexed his fingers inside the gloves, frowning.

More than one boy? What was Pennywise talking about?

Henry dismissed Keene with a wave of his hand. “Who cares what he thought? He's dead, and good riddance.” His eyes gleamed blackly. “Are you going to the lake now?”

“Yes. You're clear on what must be done?” Pennywise jerked his chin toward the sword at Henry's waist. “Use that. It's not the Mortal Sword, but its alliance is sufficiently demonic for this purpose.”

“I can't go to the lake with you?” Henry's voice had taken on a distinct whining tone. “Can't we just release the army now?”

“It's not midnight yet. I said I would give them until midnight. They may yet change their minds.”

“They're not going to—”

“I gave my word. I'll stand by it.” Pennywise's tone was final. “If you hear nothing from Malachi by midnight, open the gate.” Seeing Henry's hesitation, Pennywise looked impatient. “I need you to do this, Jonathan. I can't wait here for midnight; it'll take me nearly an hour to get to the lake through the tunnels, and I have no intention of letting the battle drag on very long. Future generations must know how quickly the Clave lost, and how decisive our victory was.”

“It's just that I'll be sorry to miss the summoning. I'd like to be there when you do it.” Henry's look was wistful, but there was something calculated beneath it, something sneering and grasping and planning and strangely, deliberately ... cold. Not that Pennywise seemed bothered.

To Richie's bafflement, Pennywise touched the side of Henry's face, a quick, undisguisedly affectionate gesture, before turning away and moving toward the far end of the cavern, where thick clots of shadows gathered. He paused there, a pale figure against the darkness. “Jonathan,” he called back. “You will look upon the Angel's

face someday. After all, you will inherit the Mortal Instruments once I am gone. Perhaps one day you, too, will summon Raziel."

"I'd like that," Henry said, and stood very still as Pennywise, with a final nod, disappeared into the darkness. Henry's voice dropped to a half whisper. "I'd like it very much," he snarled. "I'd like to spit in his bastard face." He whirled, his face a white mask in the dim light. "You might as well come out, Richie," he said. "I know you're here."

Richie froze—but only for a second. His body moved before his mind had time to catch up, catapulting him to his feet. He ran for the tunnel entrance, thinking only of making it outside, of getting a message, somehow, to Jim.

But the entrance was blocked. Henry stood there, his expression cool and gloating, his arms outstretched, his fingers almost touching the tunnel walls. "Really," he said, "you didn't actually think you were faster than me, did you?"

Richie skidded to a halt. His heart beat unevenly in his chest, like a broken metronome, but his voice was steady. "Since I'm better than you in every other conceivable way, it did stand to reason."

Henry just smiled. "I could hear your heart beating," he said softly. "When you were watching me with Robert. Did it bother you?"

"That you seem to be dating Pennywise?" Richie shrugged. "You're a little young for him, to be honest."

"*What?*" For the first time since Richie had met him, Henry seemed flabbergasted. Richie was able to enjoy it for only a moment, though, before Henry's composure returned. But there was a dark glint in his eye that indicated he hadn't forgiven Richie for making him lose his calm. "I wondered about you sometimes," Henry went on, in the same soft voice. "There seemed to be something to you, on occasion, something behind those yellow eyes of yours. A flash of intelligence, unlike the rest of your mud-stupid adoptive family. But I suppose it was only a pose, an attitude. You're as foolish as the rest, despite your decade of good upbringing."

"What do you know about my upbringing?"

"More than you might think." Henry lowered his hands. "But *my* father didn't kept me isolated for ten years."

"What do you mean?" Richie's voice came out in a whisper, and then, as he stared at Henry's unmoving, unsmiling face, he seemed to see the other boy as if for the first time—the white hair, the black anthracite eyes, the hard lines of his face, like something chiseled out of stone—and he saw in his mind the face of Pennywise's as the angel had showed it to him, young and sharp and alert and hungry, and he knew. "You," he said. "Pennywise's your father."

But Henry was no longer standing in front of him; he was suddenly behind him, and his arms were around Richie's shoulders as if he meant to embrace him, but his hands were clenched into fists. "Hail and farewell, my friend," he spat, and then his arms jerked up and tightened, cutting off Richie's breath.

27. A Heart of Darkness

Notes for the Chapter:

Three left :(

Eddie was exhausted. A dull, pounding headache, the aftereffect of drawing the Alliance rune, had taken up residence in his frontal lobe. It felt like someone trying to kick a door down from the wrong side.

“Are you all right?” Sonia put her hand on Eddie's shoulder. “You look like you aren’t feeling well.”

Eddie glanced down—and saw the spidering black rune that crossed the back of his mother’s hand, the twin of the one on Jim's palm. His stomach tightened. He was managing to deal with the fact that within a few hours his mother might actually be fighting an army of demons—but only by willfully pushing down the thought every time it surfaced.

“I’m just wondering where Stan is.” Eddie rose to his feet. “I’m going to go get him.”

“Down there?” Sonia gazed worriedly down at the crowd. It was thinning out now, Eddie noted, as those who had been Marked flooded out the front doors into the square outside. Malachi stood by the doors, his bronze face impassive as he directed Downworlders and Shadowhunters where to go.

“I’ll be fine.” Eddie edged past his mother and Jim toward the dais steps. “I’ll be right back.”

People turned to stare as he descended the steps and slipped into the crowd. He could feel the eyes on him, the weight of the staring. He scanned the crowd, looking for the Denbroughs or Stan, but saw nobody he knew—and it was hard enough seeing anything over the throng, considering how short she was. With a sigh, Eddie slipped away toward the west side of the Hall, where the crowd was thinner.

The moment he neared the tall line of marble pillars, a hand shot out

from between two of them and pulled him sideways. Eddie had time to gasp in surprise, and then he was standing in the darkness behind the largest of the pillars, his back against the cold marble wall, Stan's hands gripping his arms. "Don't scream, okay? It's just me," he said.

"Of course I'm not going to scream. Don't be ridiculous." Eddie glanced from side to side, wondering what was going on—he could see only bits and pieces of the larger Hall, in between the pillars. "But what's with the James Bond spy stuff? I was coming to find you anyway."

"I know. I've been waiting for you to come down off the dais. I wanted to talk to you where no one else could hear us." He licked his lips nervously. "I heard what Adrian said. What he wanted."

"Oh, Stan." Eddie's shoulders sagged. "Look, nothing happened. Jim sent him away—"

"Maybe he shouldn't have," Stan said. "Maybe he should have given Adrian what he wanted."

Eddie blinked at him. "You mean *you*? Don't be stupid. There's no way—"

"There is a way." His grip on Eddie's arms tightened. "I want to do this. I want Jim to tell Adrian that the deal is on. Or I'll tell him myself."

"I know what you're doing," Eddie protested. "And I respect it and I admire you for it, but you don't have to do it, Stan, you don't have to. What Adrian's asking for is wrong, and nobody will judge you for not sacrificing yourself for a war that isn't yours to fight—"

"But that's just it," Stan said. "What Adrian said was right. I *am* a vampire, and you keep forgetting it. Or maybe you just want to forget. But I'm a Downworlder and you're a Shadowhunter, and this fight is both of ours."

"But you're not like them—"

"I am one of them." He spoke slowly, deliberately, as if to make absolutely sure that Eddie understood every word he was saying.

“And I always will be. If the Downworlders fight this war with the Shadowhunters, without the participation of Adrian's people, then there will be no Council seat for the Night Children. They won't be a part of the world Jim's trying to create, a world where Shadowhunters and Downworlders work together. Are together. The vampires will be shut out of that. They'll be the enemies of the Shadowhunters. I'll be *your* enemy.”

“I could never be your enemy.”

“It would kill me,” Stan said simply. “But I can't help anything by standing back and pretending I'm not part of this. And I'm not asking your permission. I would like your help. But if you won't give it to me, I'll get Mike to take me to the vampire camp anyway, and I'll give myself up to Adrian. Do you understand?”

Eddie stared at him. Stan was holding his arms so tightly Eddie could feel the blood beating in the skin under his hands. He ran his tongue over his dry lips; his mouth tasted bitter. “What can I do,” he whispered, “to help you?”

Eddie looked up at him incredulously as Stan told him. He was already shaking his head before Stan finished. “No,” he said, “that's a crazy idea, Stan. It's not a gift; it's a punishment—”

“Maybe not for me,” Stan said. He glanced toward the crowd, and Eddie saw Mike standing there, watching them, his expression openly curious. He was clearly waiting for Stan.

Too fast, Eddie thought. *This is all happening much too fast.*

“It's better than the alternative, Eddie.”

“No...”

“It might not hurt me at all. I mean, I've already been punished, right? I already can't go into a church, a synagogue; I can't say—I can't say holy names; I can't get older; I'm already shut out from normal life. Maybe this won't change anything.”

“But maybe it will.”

He let go of Eddie's arms, slid his hand around his side, and drew Neil's stele from his belt. He held it out to him. "Eddie," he said. "Do this for me. Please."

Eddie took the stele with numb fingers and raised it, touching the end of it to Stan's skin, just above his eyes. The first Mark, Eleven had said. The very first. He thought of it, and his stele began to move the way a dancer begins to move when the music starts. Black lines traced themselves across his forehead like a flower unfolding on a speeded-up roll of film. When Eddie was done, his right hand ached and stung, but as he drew back and stared, he knew he had drawn something perfect and strange and ancient, something from the very beginning of history. It blazed like a star above Stan's eyes as he brushed his fingers across his forehead, his expression dazzled and confused.

"I can feel it," he said. "Like a burn."

"I don't know what'll happen," Eddie whispered. "I don't know what long-term side effects it'll have."

With a twisted half smile, he raised his hand to touch Eddie's cheek. "Let's hope we get the chance to find out."

Mike was silent most of the way to the forest, keeping his head down and glancing from side to side only occasionally, his nose wrinkled in concentration. Stan wondered if he was *smelling* their way, and he decided that although that might be a little weird, it certainly counted as a useful talent. He also found that he didn't have to hurry to keep up with Mike, no matter how fast he moved. Even when they reached the beaten-down path that led into the forest and Mike started to run—swiftly, quietly, and staying low to the ground—Stan had no trouble matching his pace. It was one thing about being a vampire that he could honestly say he enjoyed.

It was over too soon; the woods thickened and they were running among the trees, over scuffed, thick-rooted ground dense with fallen leaves. The branches overhead made lacelike patterns against the starlit sky. They emerged from the trees in a clearing strewn with

large boulders that gleamed like square white teeth. There were heaped piles of leaves here and there, as if someone had been over the place with a gigantic rake.

“Adrian!” Mike had cupped his hands around his mouth and was calling out in a voice loud enough to startle the birds out of the treetops high overhead. “Adrian, show yourself!”

Silence. Then the shadows rustled; there was a soft pattering sound, like rain hitting a tin roof. The piled leaves on the ground blew up into the air in tiny cyclones. Stan heard Mike cough; he had his hands up, as if to brush the leaves away from his face, his eyes.

As suddenly as the wind had come up, it settled. Adrian stood there, only a few feet from Stan. Surrounding him was a group of vampires, pale and still as trees in the moonlight. Their expressions were cold, stripped down to a bare hostility. He recognized some of them from the Hotel Dumort: the petite Lily and the blond Jacob, his eyes as narrow as knives. But just as many of them he had never seen before.

Adrian stepped forward. His skin was sallow, his eyes ringed with black shadow, but he smiled when he saw Stan.

“Daylighter,” he breathed. “You came.”

“I came,” Stan said. “I’m here, so—it’s done.”

“It’s far from done, Daylighter.” Adrian looked toward Mike. “Lycanthrope,” he said. “Return to your pack leader and thank him for changing his mind. Tell him that the Night Children will fight beside his people on Brocelind Plain.”

Mike’s face was tight. “Jim didn’t change—”

Stan interrupted him hastily. “It’s fine, Mike. Go.”

His eyes were luminous and sad. “Stan, think,” he said. “You don’t have to do this.”

“Yes, I do.” His tone was firm. “Mike, thank you so much for bringing me here. Now go.”

“Stan—”

Stan dropped his voice. “If you don’t go, they’ll kill us both, and all this will have been for nothing. Go. Please.”

Mike nodded and turned away, Changing as he turned, so that one moment he was a slight human boy, and the next he had hit the ground running on all fours, a swift and silent wolf. He darted from the clearing and vanished into the shadows.

Stan turned back to the vampires—and almost shouted out loud; Adrian was standing directly in front of him, inches away. Up close his skin bore the telltale dark tracers of hunger. Stan thought of that night in the Hotel Dumort—faces appearing out of shadow, fleeting laughter, the smell of blood—and shivered.

Adrian reached out to Stan and took hold of his shoulders, the grip of his deceptively slight hands like iron. “Turn your head,” he said, “and look at the stars; it will be easier that way.”

“So you *are* going to kill me,” Stan said. To his surprise he didn’t feel afraid, or even particularly agitated; everything seemed to have slowed down to a perfect clarity. He was simultaneously aware of every leaf on the branches above him, every tiny pebble on the ground, every pair of eyes that rested on him.

“What did you think?” Adrian said—a little sadly, Stan thought. “It’s not personal, I assure you. It’s as I said before—you are too dangerous to be allowed to continue as you are. If I had known what you’d become—”

“You’d never have let me crawl out of that grave. I know,” said Stan.

Adrian met his eyes. “Everyone does what they must to survive. In that way even we are just like humans.” His needle teeth slid from their sheaths like delicate razors. “Hold still,” he said. “This will be quick.” He leaned forward.

“Wait,” Stan said, and when Adrian drew back with a scowl, he said it again, with more force: “Wait. There’s something I have to show you.”

Adrian made a low hissing sound. "You had better be doing more than trying to delay me, Daylighter."

"I am. There's something I thought you should see." Stan reached up and brushed the hair back from his forehead. It felt like a foolish, even theatrical, gesture, but as he did it, he saw Eddie's desperate white face as he stared up at him, the stele in his hand, and thought, *Well, for his sake, at least I've tried.*

The effect on Adrian was both startling and instantaneous. He jerked back as if Stan had brandished a crucifix at him, his eyes widening. "Daylighter," he spat, "who did this to you?"

Stan only stared. He wasn't sure what reaction he'd expected, but it hadn't been this one.

"Eddie," Adrian said, answering his own inquiry, "of course. Only a power like his would allow this—a vampire, Marked, and with a Mark like that one—"

"A Mark like *what*?" said Jacob, the slender blond boy standing just behind Adrian. The rest of the vampires were staring as well, with expressions that mingled confusion and a growing fear. Anything that frightened Adrian, Stan thought, was sure to frighten them, too.

"This Mark," Adrian said, still looking only at Stan, "is not one of those from the Gray Book. It is an even older Mark than that. One of the ancients, drawn by the Maker's own hand." He made as if to touch Simon's forehead but didn't seem quite able to bring himself to do it; his hand hovered for a moment, then fell to his side. "Such Marks are mentioned, but I have never seen one. And this one ..."

Stan said, "'Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a Mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.' You can try to kill me, Adrian. But I wouldn't advise it."

"The Mark of Cain?" Jacob said in disbelief. "This Mark on you is the Mark of *Cain*?"

"Kill him," said a redheaded female vampire who stood close to

Jacob. She spoke with a heavy accent—Russian, Stan thought, though he wasn't sure. "Kill him anyway."

Adrian's expression was a mix of fury and disbelief. "I will not," he said. "Any harm done to him will rebound upon the doer sevenfold. That is the nature of the Mark. Of course, if any of you would like to be the one to take that risk, by all means, be my guest."

No one spoke or moved.

"I thought not," said Adrian. His eyes raked Stan. "Like the evil queen in the fairy tale, Jimothy Hopper has sent me a poisoned apple. I suppose he hoped I would harm you, and reap the punishment that would follow."

"No," Stan said hastily. "No—Jim didn't even know what I'd done. His gesture was made in good faith. You have to honor it."

"And so you *chose* this?" For the first time there was something other than contempt, Stan thought, in the way Adrian was looking at him. "This is no simple protection spell, Daylighter. Do you know what Cain's punishment was?" He spoke softly, as if sharing a secret with Stan. "'And now thou art cursed from the earth. A fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be.'"

"Then," Stan said, "I'll wander, if that's what it comes to. I'll do what I have to do."

"All this," said Adrian, "all this for Nephilim."

"Not just for Nephilim," said Stan. "I'm doing this for you, too. Even if you don't want it." He raised his voice so that the silent vampires surrounding them could hear him. "You were worried that if other vampires knew what had happened to me, they'd think Shadowhunter blood could let them walk in the daylight too. But that's not why I have this power. It was something Pennywise did. An experiment. He caused this, not Ben. And it isn't replicable. It won't ever happen again."

"I imagine he is telling the truth," said Jacob, to Stan's surprise. "I've certainly known one or two of the Night Children who've had a taste

of Shadowhunter in the past. None of them developed a fondness for sunlight.”

“It was one thing to refuse to help the Shadowhunters before,” said Stan, turning back to Adrian, “but now, now that they’ve sent me to you—” He let the rest of the sentence hang in the air, unfinished.

“Don’t try to blackmail me, Daylighter,” said Adrian. “Once the Night Children have made a bargain, they honor it, no matter how badly they are dealt with.” He smiled slightly, needle teeth gleaming in the dark. “There is just one thing,” he said. “One last act I require from you to prove that indeed you acted here in good faith.” The stress he put on the last two words was weighted with cold.

“What’s that?” Stan asked.

“We will not be the only vampires to fight in Jimothy Hopper's battle,” Adrian said. “So will you.”

Richie opened his eyes on a silver whirlpool. His mouth was filled with bitter liquid. He coughed, wondering for a moment if he was drowning—but if so, it was on dry land. He was sitting upright with his back against a stalagmite, and his hands were bound behind him. He coughed again and salt filled his mouth. He wasn’t drowning, he realized, just choking on blood.

“Awake, mate?” Henry knelt in front of him, a length of rope in his hands, his grin like an unsheathed knife. “Good. I was afraid for a moment that I’d killed you a bit too early.”

Richie turned his head to the side and spat a mouthful of blood onto the ground. His head felt as if a balloon were being inflated inside it, pressing against the interior of his skull. The silvery whirling above his head slowed and stilled to the bright pattern of stars visible through the hole in the cave roof. “Waiting for a special occasion to kill me? Christmas is coming.”

Henry gave Richie a thoughtful look. “You have a smart mouth. You didn’t learn that from Wentworth. What did you learn from him? It

doesn't seem to me that he taught you much about fighting, either." He leaned closer. "You know what *my* father gave me for my ninth birthday? A lesson. He taught me that there's a place on a man's back where, if you sink a blade in, you can pierce his heart and sever his spine, all at once. What did you get for your ninth birthday, little angel boy? A cookie?"

Ninth birthday? Richie swallowed hard. "So tell me, what hole was he keeping you in while you were growing up? Because he definitely never talked about you. I can't imagine why."

Henry's eyes flashed. It was easy to see, now, the resemblance to Pennywise: the same unusual combination of silver-white hair and black eyes, the same fine bones that in another, less strongly molded face would have looked delicate. "I knew all about you," he said. "But you don't know anything, do you?" Henry got to his feet. "I wanted you alive to watch this, little mate," he said. "So watch, and watch carefully." With a movement so fast it was almost invisible, he drew the sword from its sheath at his waist. It had a silver hilt, and like the Mortal Sword it glowed with a dull dark light. A pattern of stars was etched into the surface of the black blade; it caught the true starlight as Henry turned the blade, and burned like fire.

Richie held his breath. He wondered if Henry merely meant to kill him; but no, Henry would have killed him already, while he was unconscious, if that were his intention. Richie watched as Henry moved toward the center of the chamber, the sword held lightly in his hand, though it looked to be quite heavy. His mind was whirling. How could Pennywise have another son? Who was his mother? Someone else in the Circle? Was he older or younger than Ben?

Henry had reached the huge red-tinged stalagmite in the center of the room. It seemed to pulse as he approached, and the smoke inside it swirled faster. Henry half-closed his eyes and lifted the blade. He said something—a word in a harsh-sounding demon language—and brought the sword across, hard and fast, in a slicing arc.

The top of the stalagmite sheared away. Inside, it was hollow as a test tube, filled with a mass of black and red smoke, which swirled upward like gas escaping a punctured balloon. There was a roar—less a sound than a sort of explosive pressure. Richie felt his ears pop. It

was suddenly hard to breathe. He wanted to claw at the neck of his shirt, but he couldn't move his hands: They were tied too tightly behind him.

Henry was half-hidden behind the pouring column of red and black. It was coiling, swirling upward—"Watch!" he cried, his face glowing. His eyes were alight, his white hair whipping on the rising wind, and Richie wondered if Pennywise had looked like that when he was young: terrible and yet somehow fascinating. "Watch and behold Pennywise's army!"

His voice was drowned out then by the sound. It was a sound like the tide crashing up the shore, the breaking of an enormous wave, carrying massive detritus with it, the smashed bones of whole cities, the onrush of a great and evil power. A huge column of twisting, rushing, flapping blackness poured from the smashed stalagmite, funneling up through the air, pouring toward—and through—the torn gap in the cavern roof. Demons. They rose shrieking, howling, and snarling, a boiling mass of claws and talons and teeth and burning eyes. Richie recalled standing on the deck of Pennywise's ship as the sky and earth and sea all around turned to nightmare; this was worse. It was as if the earth had torn open and hell had poured through. The demons carried a stench like a thousand rotting corpses. Richie's hands twisted against each other, twisted until the ropes cut into his wrists and they bled. A sour taste rose in his mouth, and he choked helplessly on blood and bile as the last of the demons rose and vanished overhead, a dark flood of horror, blotting out the stars.

Richie thought he might have passed out for a minute or two. Certainly there was a period of blackness during which the shrieking and howling overhead faded and he seemed to hang in space, pinned between the earth and the sky, feeling a sense of detachment that was somehow ... peaceful.

It was over too soon. Suddenly he was slammed back into his body, his wrists in agony, his shoulders straining backward, the stench of demon so heavy in the air that he turned his head aside and retched helplessly onto the ground. He heard a dry chuckle and looked up, swallowing hard against the acid in his throat. Henry knelt over him, his legs straddling Richie's, his eyes shining. "It's all right," he said. "They're gone."

Richie's eyes were streaming, his throat scraped raw. His voice came out a croak. "He said midnight. Pennywise said to open the gate at midnight. It can't be midnight yet."

"I always figure it's better to ask for forgiveness than permission in these sorts of situations." Henry glanced up at the now empty sky. "It should take them five minutes to reach Brocelind Plain from here, quite a bit less time than it will Father to reach the lake. I want to see some Nephilim blood spilled. I want them to writhe and die on the ground. They deserve shame before they get oblivion."

"Do you really think that the Nephilim have so little chance against demons? It's not as if they're unprepared—"

Henry dismissed him with a flick of his wrist. "I thought you were listening to us. Didn't you understand the plan? Don't you know what my father's going to do?"

Richie said nothing.

"It was good of you," said Henry, "to lead me to Keene that night. If he hadn't revealed that the Mirror we sought was Lake Lyn, I'm not sure this night would have been possible. Because anyone who bears the first two Mortal Instruments and stands before the Mortal Glass can summon the Angel Raziel out of it, just as Jonathan Shadowhunter did a thousand years ago. And once you've summoned the Angel, you can demand of him one thing. One task. One ... favor."

"A favor?" Richie felt cold all over. "And Pennywise is going to demand the defeat of the Shadowhunters at Brocelind?"

Henry stood up. "That would be a waste," he said. "No. He's going to demand that all Shadowhunters who have not drunk from the Mortal Cup—all those who are not his followers—be stripped of their powers. They will no longer be Nephilim. And as such, bearing the Marks they do ..." He smiled. "They will become Forsaken, easy prey for the demons, and those Downworlders who have not fled will be quickly eradicated."

Richie's ears were ringing with a harsh, tinny sound. He felt dizzy.

“Even Pennywise,” he said, “even Pennywise would never do that—”

“Please,” said Henry. “Do you really think my father won’t go through with what he’s planned? You’re a fool, aren’t you—just like my father always said.”

Richie shook his head. He’d been pulling at the ropes binding his wrists, but every time he jerked at them, they seemed to get tighter. He could feel the pounding of his pulse in each of his fingers. “How do you know he wasn’t lying to you?”

“Because I am his blood. I am just like him. When he’s gone, I’ll rule the Clave after him.”

“I wouldn’t brag about being just like him if I were you.”

“There’s that, too.” Henry’s voice was emotionless. “I don’t pretend to be anything other than I am. I don’t behave as if I’m horrified that my father does what he needs to do to save his people, even if they don’t want—or if you ask me, deserve—saving.”

There was something in his voice that made Richie abandon his struggle against the bindings and look up. Henry was still holding his blackly gleaming sword. It was a dark, beautiful thing, Richie thought, even when Henry lowered the point of it so that it rested above Richie’s collarbone, just nicking his Adam’s apple.

Richie struggled to keep his voice steady. “So now what? You’re going to kill me while I’m tied up? Does the thought of fighting me scare you that much?”

Nothing, not a flicker of emotion, passed across Henry’s pale face. “You,” he said, “are not a threat to me. You’re a pest. An annoyance.”

“Then why won’t you untie my hands?”

Henry, utterly still, stared at him. He looked like a statue, Richie thought, like the statue of some long-dead prince—someone who’d died young and spoiled. And that was the difference between Henry and Pennywise; though they shared the same cold marble looks, Henry had an air about him of something ruined—something eaten away from the inside.

"I'm not a fool," Henry said, "and you can't bait me. I left you alive only long enough so that you could see the demons. When you die now, and return to your angel ancestors, you can tell them there is no place for them in this world anymore. They've failed the Clave, and the Clave no longer needs them. We have Pennywise now."

"You're killing me because you want me to give a message to *God* for you?" Richie shook his head, the point of the blade scraping across his throat. "You're crazier than I thought."

Henry just smiled and pushed the blade in slightly deeper; when Richie swallowed, he could feel the point of it denting his windpipe. "If you have any real prayers, say them now."

"I don't have any prayers," said Richie. "I have a message, though. For your father. Will you give it to him?"

"Of course," Henry said smoothly, but there was something in the way he said it, a flicker of hesitation before he spoke, that confirmed what Richie was already thinking.

"You're lying," he said. "You won't give him the message, because you're not going to tell him what you've done. He never asked you to kill me, and he won't be happy when he finds out."

"Nonsense. You're nothing to him."

"You think he'll never know what happened to me if you kill me now, here. You can tell him I died in the battle, or he'll just assume that's what happened. But you're wrong if you think he won't know. Pennywise always knows."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Henry said, but his face had tightened.

Richie kept talking, pressing home his advantage. "You can't hide what you're doing, though. There's a witness."

"A witness?" Henry looked almost surprised, which Richie counted as something of a victory. "What are you talking about?"

"The raven," Richie said. "He's been watching from the shadows."

He'll tell Pennywise everything."

"Gard?" Henry's gaze snapped up, and though the raven was nowhere to be seen, Henry's face when he glanced back down at Richie was full of doubt.

"If Pennywise knows you murdered me while I was tied up and helpless, he'll be disgusted with you," Richie said, and he heard his own voice drop into his father's cadences, the way Pennywise spoke when he wanted something: soft and persuasive. "He'll call you a coward."

Henry said nothing. He was staring down at Richie, his lips twitching, and hatred boiled behind his eyes like poison.

"Untie me," Richie said softly. "Untie me and fight me. It's the only way."

Henry's lip twitched again, hard, and this time Richie thought he had gone too far. Henry drew the sword back and raised it, and the moonlight burst off it in a thousand silver shards, silver as the stars, silver as the color of his hair. He bared his teeth—and the sword's whistling breath cut the night air with a scream as he brought it down in a whirling arc.

28. Awake, Arise, or Be Forever Fallen

Notes for the Chapter:

Two chapters left I can't right now :(

Eddie sat on the steps of the dais in the Hall of Accords, holding the stele in his hands. He had never felt quite so alone. The Hall was utterly, totally empty. Eddie had looked everywhere for Ben once the fighters had all passed through the Portal, but he hadn't been able to find him. Max had told him that Ben was probably back at the Mayfields' house, where Max and a few other teenagers were meant to be looking after at least a dozen children under fighting age. She'd tried to get Eddie to go there with her, but Eddie had declined. If he couldn't find Ben, he'd rather be alone than with near strangers. Or so he'd thought. But sitting here, he found the silence and the emptiness becoming more and more oppressive. Still, he hadn't moved. He was trying as hard as he could not to think of Richie, not to think of Stan, or Beverly, not to think of his mother or Jim or Bill—and the only way not to think, he had found, was to remain motionless and to stare at a single square of marble on the floor instead, counting the cracks in it, over and over.

There were six. *One, two, three. Four. five. six.* He finished the count and started again, from the beginning. *One—*

The sky overhead exploded.

Or at least that was what it sounded like. Eddie threw his head back and stared upward, through the clear roof of the Hall. The sky had been dark a moment ago; now it was a roiling mass of flame and blackness, shot through with an ugly orange light. Things moved against that light—hideous things he didn't want to see, things that made him grateful to the darkness for obscuring his view. The occasional glimpse was bad enough.

The transparent skylight overhead rippled and bent as the demon host passed, as if it were being warped by tremendous heat. At last there was a sound like a gunshot, and a huge crack appeared in the glass, spiderwebbing out into countless fissures. Eddie ducked,

covering his head with his hands, as glass rained down around him like tears.

They were almost to the battlefield when the sound came, ripping the night in half. One moment the woods were as silent as they were dark. The next moment the sky was lit with a hellish orange glow. Stan staggered and nearly fell; he caught at a tree trunk to steady himself and looked up, barely able to believe what he was seeing. All around him the other vampires were staring up at the sky, their white faces like night-blooming flowers, lifting to catch the moonlight as nightmare after nightmare streaked across the sky.

“You keep passing out on me,” Henry said. “It’s extremely tedious.”

Richie opened his eyes. Pain lanced through his head. He put his hand up to touch the side of his face—and realized his hands were no longer tied behind him. A length of rope trailed from his wrist. His hand came away from his face black—blood, dark in the moonlight.

He stared around him. They were no longer in the cavern: He was lying on soft dirt and grass on the valley floor, not far from the stone house. He could hear the sound of the water in the creek, clearly close by. Knotted tree branches overhead blocked some of the moonlight, but it was still fairly bright.

“Get up,” Henry said. “You have five seconds before I kill you where you are.”

Richie stood as slowly as he thought he could get away with. He was still a little dizzy. Fighting for balance, he dug the heels of his boots into the soft dirt, trying to give himself some stability. “Why did you bring me out here?”

“Two reasons,” Henry said. “One, I enjoyed knocking you out. Two, it would be bad for either of us to get blood on the floor of that cavern. Trust me. And I intend to spill plenty of your blood.”

Richie felt at his belt, and his heart sank. Either he’d dropped most of his weapons while Henry was dragging him through the tunnels, or,

more likely, Henry had thrown them away. All he had left was a dagger. It was a short blade—too short, no match for the sword.

“Not much of a weapon, that.” Henry grinned, white in the moon-dazzled darkness.

“I can’t fight with this,” Richie said, trying to sound as quavering and nervous as he could.

“What a shame.” Henry came closer to Richie, grinning. He was holding his sword loosely, theatrically unconcerned, the tips of his fingers beating a light rhythm on the hilt. If there was ever going to be an opening for him, Richie thought, this was probably it. He swung his arm back and punched Henry as hard as he could in the face.

Bone crunched under his knuckles. The blow sent Henry sprawling. He skidded backward in the dirt, the sword flying from his grip. Richie caught it up as he darted forward, and a second later was standing over Henry, blade in hand.

Henry’s nose was bleeding, the blood a scarlet streak across his face. He reached up and pulled his collar aside, baring his pale throat. “So go ahead,” he said. “Kill me already.”

Richie hesitated. He didn’t want to hesitate, but there it was: an annoying reluctance to kill anyone lying helpless on the ground in front of him. But Henry was a murderer. He’d killed Georgie and Keene.

He raised the sword.

And Henry erupted off the ground, faster than the eye could follow. He seemed to fly into the air, performing an elegant backflip and landing gracefully on the grass barely a foot away. As he did, he kicked out, striking Richie’s hand. The kick sent the sword spinning out of Richie’s grasp. Henry caught it out of the air, laughing, and slashed out with the blade, whipping it toward Richie’s heart. Richie leaped backward and the blade split the air just in front of him, slicing his shirt open down the front. There was a stinging pain and Richie felt blood welling from a shallow slice across his chest.

Henry chuckled, advancing toward Richie, who backed up, fumbling his insufficient dagger out of his belt as he went. He looked around, desperately hoping there was something else he could use as a weapon—a long stick, anything. There was nothing around him but the grass, the river running by, and the trees above, spreading their thick branches overhead like a green net.

“And we find ourselves exactly where we were five minutes ago,” Henry said. “You’ve had your chance, Denbrough. Any last words?”

Riche stared up at him, his mouth streaming blood, his eyes stinging with sweat, and felt only a sense of total and empty exhaustion. Was this really how he was going to die? “Denbrough?” he said. “You know that’s not my name.”

“You have as much of a claim to it as you have to the name of Tozier,” said Henry. He bent forward, leaning his weight onto the dagger. Its tip pierced Richie’s skin, sending a hot stab of pain through his body. Henry’s face was inches away. He tossed his white hair back: It was lank with sweat and creek water. “You’re a changeling,” he said. “My father taught me all things about Shadowhunters, their weakness, their strength. You’re *all* the same.” His eyes were black and glinting, like the carapaces of dead insects, and suddenly Richie heard a voice, as if in a dream, saying, *Jonathan’s not a baby anymore. He isn’t even human; he’s a monster.*

“You’re the one,” Richie choked. “The one with the demon blood. Not Ben.”

“That’s right.” The dagger slid another millimeter into Richie’s flesh. Henry was still grinning, but it was a rictus, like a skull’s. “He’s the angel boy. I had to hear all about him. His pretty angel face and his pretty manners and his delicate, delicate feelings. No wonder my father was ashamed of him.”

Richie forgot the blood in his mouth, forgot the pain. “You’re the one he’s ashamed of. You think he wouldn’t take you with him to the lake because he needed you to stay here and open the gate at midnight? Like he didn’t know you wouldn’t be able to wait. He didn’t take you with him because he’s ashamed to stand up in front of the Angel and show him what he’s done. Show him the thing he made. Show him

you.” Richie gazed up at Henry—he could feel a terrible, triumphant pity blazing in his own eyes. “He knows there’s nothing human in you. Maybe he loves you, but he hates you too—”

“Shut up!” Henry pushed down on the dagger, twisting the hilt. Richie arched backward with a scream, and agony burst like lightning behind his eyes. *I’m going to die*, he thought. *I’m dying. This is it*. He wondered if his heart had already been pierced. He couldn’t move, couldn’t breathe. He knew now what it must be like for a butterfly pinned to a board. He tried to speak, tried to say a name, but nothing came out of his mouth but more blood.

And yet Henry seemed to read his eyes. “*Eddie*. I’d almost forgotten. You’re in love with him, aren’t you? The shame of your stupid choices must nearly have killed you. You could have spent the rest of your life with him, if only you weren’t so stupid.” He bent down, pushing the knife in harder, its edge scraping bone. He spoke in Richie’s ear, a voice as soft as a whisper. “He loved you, too,” he said. “Keep that in mind while you die.”

Darkness flooded in from the edges of Richie’s vision, like dye spilling onto a photograph, blotting out the image. Suddenly there was no pain at all. He felt nothing, not even Henry’s weight on him, as if he were floating. Henry’s face drifted over him, white against the darkness, the dagger raised in his hand. Something bright gold glittered at Henry’s wrist, as if he were wearing a bracelet. But it wasn’t a bracelet, because it was moving. Henry looked toward his hand, surprised, as the dagger fell from his loosened grasp and struck the mud with an audible sound.

Then the hand itself, separated from his wrist, thumped to the ground beside it.

Richie stared wonderingly as Henry’s severed hand bounced and came to rest against a pair of high black boots. The boots were attached to a pair of muscular legs, rising to a slender torso and a familiar face capped with brown hair. Richie raised his eyes and saw Ben, his whip soaked with blood, his eyes fastened on Henry, who was staring at the bloody stump of his wrist with openmouthed amazement.

Ben smiled grimly. "That was for Georgie, you bastard."

"*Son of a bitch*," Henry hissed—and sprang to his feet as Ben's whip came slashing at him again with incredible speed. He ducked sideways and was gone. There was a rustle—he must have vanished into the trees, Richie thought, though it hurt too much to turn his head and look.

"Richie!" Ben knelt down over him, his stele shining in his left hand. His eyes were bright with tears; he must seem pretty bad, Richie realized, for Ben to look like that.

"Ben," he tried to say. He wanted to tell him to go, to run, that no matter how spectacular and brave and talented he was—and he was all those things—he was no match for Henry. And there was no way that Henry was going to let a little thing like getting his hand sliced off stop him. But all that came out of Richie's mouth was a sort of gurgling noise.

"Don't talk." He felt the tip of Ben's stele burn against the skin of his chest. "You'll be fine." Ben smiled down at him tremulously. "You're probably wondering what the hell I'm doing here," he said. "I don't know how much you know—I don't know what Henry's told you—but I'm not Pennywise's son." The *iratze* was close to finished; already Richie could feel the pain fading. He nodded slightly, trying to tell him: *I know*. "Anyway, I wasn't going to come looking for you after you ran off, because you said in your note not to, and I got that. But there was no way I was going to let you die thinking you deserved it, though honestly, how you could have thought anything so stupid in the first place—" Ben's hand jerked, and she froze, not wanting to spoil the rune. "So I got Eleven to help me track you. I used that little wooden soldier you gave to Georgie. I don't think Eleven would have done it normally, but let's just say she was in an unusually good mood. And once I knew where you were, well, she'd already set up that Portal, and I'm very good at sneaking—"

Ben screamed. Richie tried to reach for him, but he was beyond his grasp, being lifted, flung to the side. His whip fell from his hand. Ben scrambled to his knees, but Henry was already in front of him. His eyes blazed with rage, and there was a bloody cloth tied around the stump of his wrist. Ben darted for his whip, but Henry moved faster.

He spun and kicked out at him, hard. His booted foot connected with Ben's rib cage. Richie almost thought he could hear Ben's ribs crack as he flew backward, landing awkwardly on his side. He heard him cry out—Ben, who never cried out in pain—as Henry kicked him again and then caught up the whip, brandishing it in his hand.

Richie rolled onto his side. The almost finished *iratze* had helped, but the pain in his chest was still bad, and he knew, in a detached sort of way, that the fact that he was coughing up blood probably meant that he had a punctured lung. He wasn't sure how long that gave him. Minutes, probably. He scrabbled for the dagger where Henry had dropped it, next to the grisly remains of his hand. Richie staggered to his feet. The smell of blood was everywhere. He thought of Eleven's vision, the world turned to blood, and his slippery hand tightened on the hilt of the dagger.

He took a step forward. Then another. Every step felt like he was dragging his feet through cement. Ben was screaming curses at Henry, who was laughing as he brought the whip down across Ben's body. His screams drew Richie forward like a fish caught on a hook, but they grew fainter as he moved. The world was spinning around him like a carnival ride.

One more step, Richie told himself. *One more*. Henry had his back to him; he was concentrating on Ben. He probably thought Richie was already dead. And he nearly was. *One step*, he told himself, but he couldn't do it, couldn't move, couldn't bring himself to drag his feet one more step forward. Blackness was rushing in at the edges of his vision—a more profound blackness than the darkness of sleep. A blackness that would erase everything he had ever seen and bring him a rest that would be absolute. Peaceful. He thought, suddenly, of Eddie—Eddie as he had last seen him, asleep, with his messy dark hair spread across the pillow and his cheek on his hand. Richie had thought then that he had never seen anything so peaceful in his life, but of course Eddie had only been sleeping, like anyone else might sleep. It hadn't been his peace that had surprised Richie, but his own. The peace he felt at being with Eddie was like nothing he had ever known before.

Pain jarred up his spine, and he realized with surprise that somehow, without any volition of his own, his legs had moved him forward that

last crucial step. Henry had his arm back, the whip shining in his hand; Ben lay on the grass, a crumpled heap, no longer screaming—no longer moving at all. “You little Byers bitch,” Henry was saying. “I should have smashed your face in with that hammer when I had the chance—”

And Richie brought his hand up, with the dagger in it, and sank the blade into Henry's back.

Henry staggered forward, the whip falling out of his hand. He turned slowly and looked at Richie, and Richie thought, with a distant horror, that maybe Henry really wasn't human, that he was unkillable after all. Henry's face was blank, the hostility gone from it, and the dark fire from his eyes. He no longer looked like Pennywise, though. He looked—scared.

He opened his mouth, as if he meant to say something to Richie, but his knees were already buckling. He crashed to the ground, the force of his fall sending him sliding down the incline and into the river. He came to rest on his back, his eyes staring sightlessly up at the sky; the water flowed around him, carrying dark threads of his blood downstream on the current.

“Richie!” It was Ben, his face bloody, struggling into a sitting position. “Ben!”

Richie tried to turn toward him, tried to say something, but his words were gone. He slid to his knees. A heavy weight was pressing on his shoulders, and the earth was calling him: down, down, down. He was barely aware of Ben crying his name as the darkness carried him away.

Stan was a veteran of countless battles. That is, if you counted battles engaged in while playing Dungeons and Dragons. His friend Belch was the military history buff and he was the one who usually organized the war part of the games, which involved dozens of tiny figurines moving in straight lines across a flat landscape drawn on butcher paper.

That was the way he'd always thought of battles—or the way they were in movies, with two groups of people advancing at each other across a flat expanse of land. Straight lines and orderly progression.

This was nothing like that.

This was chaos, a melee of shouting and movement, and the landscape wasn't flat but a mass of mud and blood churned into a thick, unstable paste. Stan had imagined that the Night Children would walk to the battlefield and be greeted by someone in charge; he imagined he'd see the battle from a distance first and be able to watch as the two sides clashed against each other. But there was no greeting, and there were no sides. The battle loomed up out of the darkness as if he'd wandered by accident from a deserted side street into a riot in the middle of Times Square—suddenly there were crowds surging around him, hands grabbing him, shoving him out of the way, and the vampires were scattering, diving into the battle without even a glance back for him.

And there were demons—demons everywhere, and he'd never imagined the kind of sounds they'd make, the screaming and hooting and grunting, and what was worse, the sounds of tearing and shredding and hungry satisfaction.

Stan wished he could turn his vampire hearing off, but he couldn't, and the sounds were like knives piercing his eardrums.

He stumbled over a body lying half in and half out of the mud, turned to see if help was needed, and saw that the Shadowhunter at his feet was gone from the shoulders up. White bone gleamed against the dark earth, and despite Stan's vampire nature, he felt nauseated. *I must be the only vampire in the world sickened by the sight of blood*, he thought, and then something struck him hard from behind and he went over, skidding down a slope of mud into a pit.

Stan's wasn't the only body down there. He rolled onto his back just as the demon loomed up over him. It looked like the image of Death from a medieval woodcut—an animated skeleton, a bloodied hatchet clutched in one bony hand. He threw himself to the side as the blade thumped down, inches from his face. The skeleton made a disappointed hissing noise and hoisted the hatchet again—

And was struck from the side by a club of knotted wood. The skeleton burst apart like a piñata filled with bones. They rattled into pieces with a sound like castanets clacking before vanishing into the darkness.

A Shadowhunter stood over Stan. It was no one he'd ever seen before. A tall man, bearded and blood-splattered, who ran a grimy hand across his forehead as he stared down at Stan, leaving a dark streak behind. "You all right?"

Stunned, Stan nodded and began scrambling to his feet. "Thanks."

The stranger leaned down, offering a hand to help Stan up. Stan accepted—and went flying up out of the pit. He landed on his feet at the edge, his feet skidding on the wet mud. The stranger offered a sheepish grin. "Sorry. Downworlder strength—my partner's a werewolf. I'm not used to it." He peered at Stan's face. "You're a vampire, aren't you?"

"How did you know?"

The man grinned. It was a tired sort of grin, but there was nothing unfriendly about it. "Your fangs. They come out when you're fighting. I know because—" He broke off. Stan could have filled in the rest for him: *I know because I've killed my fair share of vampires.* "Anyway. Thanks. For fighting with us."

"I—" Stan was about to say that he hadn't exactly fought yet. Or contributed anything, really. He turned to say it, and got exactly one word out of his mouth before something impossibly huge and clawed and ragged-winged swept down out of the sky and dug its talons into the Shadowhunter's back.

The man didn't even cry out. His head went back, as if he were looking up in surprise, wondering what had hold of him—and then he was gone, whipping up into the empty black sky in a whirl of teeth and wings. His club thumped to the ground at Stan's feet.

Stan didn't move. The whole thing, from the moment he'd fallen into the pit, had taken less than a minute. He turned numbly, staring around him at the blades whirling through the darkness, at the

slashing talons of demons, at the points of illumination that raced here and there through the darkness like fireflies darting through foliage—and then he realized what they were. The gleaming lights of seraph blades.

He couldn't see the Denbroughs, or the Mayfields, or Jim, or anyone else he might recognize. He wasn't a Shadowhunter. And yet that man had thanked him, thanked him for fighting. What he'd told Eddie was true—this was his battle too, and he was needed here. Not human Stan, who was gentle and geeky and hated the sight of blood, but vampire Stan, a creature he barely even knew.

A true vampire knows he is dead, Adrian had said. But Stan didn't feel dead. He'd never felt more alive. He turned as another demon loomed up in front of him: this one a lizard-thing, scaled, with rodent teeth. It swept down on Stan with its black claws extended.

Stan leaped. He struck the massive side of the thing and clung, his nails digging in, the scales giving way under his grip. The Mark on his forehead throbbed as he sank his fangs into the demon's neck.

It tasted awful.

When the glass stopped falling, there was a hole in the ceiling, several feet wide, as if a meteor had crashed through it. Cold air blew in through the gap. Shivering, Eddie got to his feet, brushing glass dust from his clothes.

The witchlight that had lit the Hall had been doused: It was gloomy inside now, thick with shadows and dust. The faint illumination of the fading Portal in the square was just visible, glowing through the open front doors.

It was probably no longer safe to stay in here, Eddie thought. He should go to the Mayfields' and join Max. He was partway across the Hall when footsteps sounded on the marble floor. Heart pounding, he turned and saw Malachi, a long, spidery shadow in the half-light, striding toward the dais. But what was he still doing here? Shouldn't he be with the rest of the Shadowhunters on the battlefield?

As he drew closer to the dais, Eddie noticed something that made him put his hand to his mouth, stifling a cry of surprise. There was a hunched dark shape perched on Malachi's shoulder. A bird. A raven, to be exact.

Gard.

Eddie ducked to crouch behind a pillar as Malachi climbed the dais steps. There was something unmistakably furtive in the way he glanced from side to side. Apparently satisfied that he was unobserved, he drew something small and glittering from his pocket and slipped it onto his finger. A ring? He reached to twist it, and Eddie remembered Keene in the library at the Institute, taking the ring from Ben's hand ...

The air in front of Malachi shimmered faintly, as if with heat. A voice spoke from it, a familiar voice, cool and cultured, now touched with just the faintest annoyance.

"What is it, Malachi? I'm in no mood for small talk right now."

"My Lord Pennywise," said Malachi. His usual hostility had been replaced with a slimy obsequiousness. "Gard visited me not a moment ago, bringing news. I assumed you had already reached the Mirror, and therefore he sought me out instead. I thought you might want to know."

Pennywise's tone was sharp. "Very well. What news?"

"It's your son, Lord. Your *other* son. Gard tracked him to the valley of the cave. He may even have followed you through the tunnels to the lake."

Eddie clutched the pillar with whitened fingers. They were talking about Ben.

Pennywise grunted. "Did he meet his brother there?"

"Gard says that he left the two of them fighting."

Eddie felt his stomach turn over. Ben, fighting Henry? A wave of panic surged over him, so intense that for a moment his ears buzzed.

By the time the room swam back into focus, he had missed whatever Pennywise had said to Malachi in return.

“It is the ones old enough to be Marked but not old enough to fight that concern me,” Malachi was saying now. “They didn’t vote in the Council’s decision. It seems unfair to punish them in the same way that those who are fighting must be punished.”

“I did consider that.” Pennywise’s voice was a bass rumble. “Because teenagers are more lightly Marked, it takes them longer to become Forsaken. Several days, at least. I believe it may well be reversible.”

“While those of us who have drunk from the Mortal Cup will remain entirely unaffected?”

“I’m busy, Malachi,” said Pennywise. “I’ve told you that you’ll be safe. I am trusting my own life to this process. Have some faith.”

Malachi bowed his head. “I have great faith, my lord. I have kept it for many years, in silence, serving you always.”

“And you will be rewarded,” said Pennywise.

Malachi looked up. “My lord—”

But the air had stopped shimmering. Pennywise was gone. Malachi frowned, then marched down the dais steps and toward the front doors. Eddie shrank back against the pillar, hoping desperately that he wouldn’t see him. His heart was pounding. What had all that been about? What was all this about Forsaken? The answer glimmered at the corner of his mind, but it seemed too horrible to contemplate. Even Pennywise wouldn’t—

Something flew at his face then, whirling and dark. He barely had time to throw his arms up to cover his eyes when something slashed along the back of his hands. Eddie heard a fierce caw, and wings beat against his upraised wrists.

“Gard! Enough!” It was Malachi’s sharp voice. “*Gard!*” There was another caw and a thump, then silence. Eddie lowered his arms and saw the raven lying motionless at the Consul’s feet—stunned or dead, he couldn’t tell. With a snarl, Malachi kicked the raven savagely out

of his way and strode toward Eddie, glowering. He caught hold of him by a bleeding wrist and hauled Eddie to his feet. “Stupid boy,” he said. “How long have you been there listening?”

“Long enough to know that you’re one of the Circle,” he spat, twisting his wrist in his grasp, but he held firm. “You’re on Pennywise’s side.”

“There is only one side.” His voice came out in a hiss. “The Clave is foolish, misguided, pandering to half men and monsters. All I want is to make it pure, to return it to its former glory. A goal you’d think every Shadowhunter would approve of, but no—they listen to fools and demon lovers like you and Jimothy Hopper. And now you’ve sent the flower of the Nephilim to die in this ridiculous battle—an empty gesture that will accomplish nothing. Pennywise has already begun the ritual; soon the Angel will rise, and the Nephilim will become Forsaken. All those save the few under Pennywise’s protection—”

“That’s murder! He’s murdering Shadowhunters!”

“Not murder,” said the Consul. His voice rang with a fanatic’s passion. “Cleansing. Pennywise will make a new world of Shadowhunters, a world purged of weakness and corruption.”

“Weakness and corruption aren’t in the world,” Eddie snapped. “They’re in people. And they always will be. The world just needs good people to balance them out. And you’re planning to kill them all.”

He looked at Eddie for a moment with honest surprise, as if he was astonished at the force in his tone. “Fine words from a boy who would betray his own father.” Malachi jerked Eddie toward him, yanking brutally on his bleeding wrist. “Perhaps we should see just how much Pennywise would mind if I taught you—”

But Eddie never found out what he wanted to teach him. A dark shape shot between them—wings outspread and claws extended.

The raven caught Malachi with the tip of a talon, raking a bloody groove across his face. With a cry the Consul let go of Eddie and threw up his arms, but Gard had circled back and was slashing at him

viciously with beak and claws. Malachi staggered backward, arms flailing, until he struck the edge of a bench, hard. It fell over with a crash; unbalanced, he sprawled after it with a strangled cry—quickly cut off.

Eddie raced to where Malachi lay crumpled on the marble floor, a circle of blood already pooling around him. He had landed on a pile of glass from the broken ceiling, and one of the jagged chunks had pierced his throat. Gard was still hovering in the air, circling Malachi's body. He gave a triumphant caw as Eddie stared at him—apparently he hadn't appreciated the Consul's kicks and blows. Malachi should have known better than to attack one of Pennywise's creatures, Eddie thought sourly. The bird was no more forgiving than his master.

But there was no time to think about Malachi now. Bill had said that there were wards up around the lake, and that if anyone Portaled there, an alarm would go off. Pennywise was probably already at the Mirror—there was no time to waste. Backing slowly away from the raven, Eddie turned and dashed toward the front doors of the Hall and the glimmer of the Portal beyond.

29. Weighed in the Balance

Water struck him in the face like a blow. Eddie went down, choking, into freezing darkness; his first thought was that the Portal had faded beyond repairing, and that he was stuck in the whirling black in-between place.

His second thought was that he was already dead.

He was probably only actually unconscious for a few seconds, though it felt like the end of everything. When he came awake, it was with a shock that was like the shock of breaking through a layer of ice. He had been unconscious and now, suddenly, he wasn't; he was lying on his back on cold, damp earth, staring up at a sky so full of stars it looked like a handful of silver pieces had been flung across its dark surface. His mouth was full of brackish liquid; he turned his head to the side, coughed and spat and gasped until he could breathe again.

When his stomach had stopped spasming, he rolled onto his side. His wrists were bound together with a faint band of glowing light, and his legs felt heavy and strange, prickling all over with intense pins and needles. He wondered if he'd lain on them strangely, or perhaps it was a side effect of nearly drowning. The back of his neck burned as if a wasp had stung him. With a gasp, he heaved himself into a sitting position, legs stretched out awkwardly in front of him, and looked around.

He was on the shore of Lake Lyn, where the water gave way to powdery sand. A black wall of rock rose behind him, the cliffs he remembered from his time here with Jim. The sand itself was dark, glittering with silver mica.

Here and there in the sand were witchlight torches, filling the air with their silvery glow, leaving a tracery of glowing lines across the surface of the water.

By the shore of the lake, a few feet away from where he sat, stood a low table made out of flat stones piled one on the other. It had clearly been assembled in haste; though the gaps between the stones were packed in with damp sand, some of the rocks were slipping

away at angles. Placed on the surface of the stones was something that made Eddie catch his breath—the Mortal Cup, and laid crossways atop it, the Mortal Sword, a tongue of black flame in the witchlight. Around the altar were the black lines of runes carved into the sand. He stared at them, but they were jumbled, meaningless—

A shadow cut across the sand, moving fast—the long black shadow of a man, made wavering and indistinct by the flickering light of the torches. By the time Eddie raised his head, he was already standing over him.

Pennywise.

The shock of seeing him was so enormous that it was almost no shock at all. Eddie felt nothing as he stared up at his father, whose face hovered against the dark sky like the moon: white, austere, pitted with black eyes like meteor craters. Over his shirt were looped a number of leather straps holding a dozen or more weapons. They bristled behind him like a porcupine's spines. He looked huge, impossibly broad, the terrifying statue of some warrior god intent on destruction.

"Edward," he said. "You took quite a risk, Portaling here. You're lucky I saw you appear in the water between one minute and the next. You were quite unconscious; if it weren't for me, you would have drowned." A muscle beside his mouth moved slightly. "And I wouldn't concern yourself overmuch with the alarm wards the Clave put up around the lake. I took those down the moment I arrived. No one knows you're here."

I don't believe you! Eddie opened his mouth to fling the words in his face. There was no sound. It was like one of those nightmares where he would try to scream and scream and nothing would happen. Only a dry puff of air came from his mouth, the gasp of someone trying to scream with a cut throat.

Pennywise shook his head. "Don't bother trying to speak. I used a Rune of Silence, one of those that the Silent Brothers used, on the back of your neck. There's a binding rune on your wrists, and another disabling your legs. I wouldn't try to stand—your legs won't hold you, and it'll only cause you pain."

Eddie glared at him, trying to bore into him with his eyes, cut him with his hatred. But he took no notice. "It could have been worse, you know. By the time I dragged you onto the bank, the lake poison had already started its work. I've cured you of it, by the way. Not that I expect your thanks." He smiled thinly. "You and I, we've never had a conversation, have we? Not a real conversation. You must be wondering why I never really seemed to have a father's interest in you. I'm sorry if that hurt you."

Now his stare went from hateful to incredulous. How could they have a conversation when he couldn't even speak? Eddie tried to force the words out, but nothing came from his throat but a thin gasp.

Pennywise turned back to his altar and placed his hand on the Mortal Sword. The sword gave off a black light, a sort of reverse glow, as if it were sucking the illumination from the air around it. "I didn't know your mother was pregnant with you when she left me," he said. He was talking to him, Eddie thought, in a way he never had before. His tone was calm, even conversational, but it wasn't that. "I knew there was something wrong. She thought she was hiding her unhappiness. I took some blood from Ithuriel, dried it to a powder, and mixed it with her food, thinking it might cure her unhappiness. If I'd known she was pregnant, I wouldn't have done it. I'd already resolved not to experiment again on a child of my own blood."

You're lying, Eddie wanted to scream at him. But he wasn't sure he was. He still sounded strange to him. Different. Maybe it was because he was telling the truth.

"After she fled Derry, I looked for her for years," he said. "And not just because she had the Mortal Cup. Because I loved her. I thought if I could only talk to her, I could make her see reason. I did what I did that night in a fit of rage, wanting to destroy her, destroy everything about our life together. But afterward I—" He shook his head, turning away to look out over the lake. "When I finally tracked her down, I'd heard rumors she'd had another child, a boy. I assumed you were Jimothy's. He'd always loved her, always wanted to take her from me. I thought she must finally have given in. Have consented to have a child with a filthy Downworlder." His voice tightened. "When I found her in your apartment in New York, she was still barely conscious. She spat at me that I'd made a monster out of her first

child, and she'd left me before I could do the same to her second. Then she went limp in my arms. All those years I'd looked for her, and that was all I had with her. Those few seconds in which she looked at me with a lifetime's worth of hate. I realized something then."

He lifted Maellartach. Eddie remembered how heavy even the half-turned Sword had been to hold, and saw as the blade rose that the muscles of Pennywise's arm stood out, hard and corded, like ropes snaking under the skin.

"I realized," he said, "that the reason she left me was to protect you. Jonathan she hated, but you—she would have done anything to protect you. To protect you from *me*. She even lived among mundanes, which I know must have pained her. It must have hurt her never to be able to raise you with any of our traditions. You are half of what you could have been. You have your talent with runes, but it's been squandered by your mundane upbringing."

He lowered the Sword. The tip of it hung, now, just by Eddie's face; he could see it out of the corner of his eye, floating at the edge of his vision like a silvery moth.

"I knew then that Sonia would never come back to me, because of you. You are the only thing in the world she ever loved more than she loved me. And because of you she hates me. And because of that, I hate the sight of you."

Eddie turned his face away. If he was going to kill him, he didn't want to see his death coming.

"Edward," said Pennywise. "Look at me."

No. He stared at the lake. Far out across the water he could see a dim red glow, like fire sunk away into ashes. He knew it was the light of the battle. His mother was there, and Jim. Maybe it was fitting that they were together, even if he wasn't with them.

I'll keep my eyes on that light, he thought. I'll keep looking at it no matter what. It'll be the last thing I ever see.

“Edward,” Pennywise said again. “You look just like her, do you know that? Just like Sonia.”

Eddie felt a sharp pain against his cheek. It was the blade of the Sword.

“I’m going to raise the Angel now,” he said. “And I want you to watch as it happens.”

There was a bitter taste in Eddie's mouth. *I know why you're so obsessed with my mother. Because she was the one thing you thought you had total control over that ever turned around and bit you. You thought you owned her and you didn't. That's why you want her here, right now, to witness you winning. That's why you'll make do with me.*

The Sword bit farther into her cheek. Pennywise said, “Look at me, Eddie.”

Eddie looked. He didn't want to, but the pain was too much—his head jerked to the side almost against his will, the blood dripping in great fat drops down his face, splattering the sand. A nauseous pain gripped him as he raised his head to look at his father.

Pennywise was gazing down at the blade of Maellartach. It, too, was stained with his blood. When he glanced back at Eddie, there was a strange light in his eyes. “Blood is needed to complete this ceremony,” he said. “I intended to use my own, but when I saw you in the lake, I knew it was Raziel's way of telling me to use my son's instead. It's why I cleared your blood of the lake's taint. You are purified now—purified and ready. So thank you, Edward, for the use of your blood.”

And in some way, Eddie thought, he meant it, meant his gratitude. He had long ago lost the ability to distinguish between force and cooperation, between fear and willingness, between love and torture. And with that realization came a rush of numbness—what was the point of hating Pennywise for being a monster when he didn't even know he was one?

“And now,” Pennywise said, “I just need a bit more,” and Eddie thought, *A bit more what?*—just as he swung the Sword back and the

starlight exploded off it, and he thought, Of course. It's not just blood he wants, but death. The Sword had fed itself on enough blood by now; it probably had a taste for it, just like Pennywise himself. Eddie's eyes followed Maellartach's black light as it sliced toward him

And went flying. Knocked out of Pennywise's hand, it hurtled into the darkness. Pennywise's eyes went wide; his gaze flicked down, fastening first on his bleeding sword hand—and then he looked up and saw, at the same moment that Eddie did, what had struck the Mortal Sword from his grasp.

Richie, a familiar-looking sword gripped in his left hand, stood at the edge of a rise of sand, barely a foot from Pennywise. Eddie could see from the older man's expression that he hadn't heard Richie approach any more than he had.

Eddie heart caught at the sight of him. Dried blood crusted the side of his face, and there was a livid red mark at his throat. His eyes shone like mirrors, and in the witchlight they looked black—black as Henry's. "Eddie," he said, not taking his eyes off Pennywise. "Eddie, are you all right?"

Richie! He struggled to say his name, but nothing could pass the blockage in his throat. He felt as if he were choking.

"He can't answer you," said Pennywise. "He can't speak."

Richie's eyes flashed. "What have you done to him?" He jabbed the sword toward Pennywise, who took a step back. The look on Pennywise's face was wary but not frightened. There was a calculation to his expression that Eddie didn't like. He knew he ought to feel triumphant, but she didn't—if anything, he felt more panicked than he had a moment ago. He'd realized that Pennywise was going to kill him—had accepted it—and now Richie was here, and his fear had expanded to encompass him as well. And he looked so ... destroyed. His gear was ripped halfway open down one arm, and the skin beneath was crisscrossed with white lines. His shirt was torn across the front, and there was a fading iratze over his heart that had not quite managed to erase the angry red scar beneath it. Dirt stained his clothes, as if he'd been rolling around on the ground. But it was

his expression that frightened Eddie the most. It was so—bleak.

“A Rune of Quietude. He won’t be hurt by it.” Pennywise eyes fastened on Richie—hungrily, Eddie thought, as if he were drinking in the sight of him. “I don’t suppose,” Pennywise asked, “that you’ve come to join me?”

Richie’s expression didn’t change. “I know what you’re planning to do,” Richie said. “I know why you’re summoning the Angel. And I won’t let you do it. I’ve already sent Ben to warn the army—”

“Warnings will do them little good. This is not the sort of danger you can run from.” Pennywise’s gaze flicked down to Richie’s sword. “Put that down,” he began, “and we can talk—” He broke off then. “That’s not your sword. That’s a Gray sword.”

Richie smiled, a dark, sweet smile. “It was Jonathan’s. He’s dead now.”

Pennywise looked stunned. “You mean—”

“I took it from the ground where he’d dropped it,” Richie said, without emotion, “after I killed him.”

Pennywise seemed dumbfounded. “*You* killed Jonathan? How could you have?”

Richie only gave him a smirk, as if he were proud of himself.

Pennywise shook his head; he still looked stunned, like a boxer who’d been hit too hard in the moment before he collapsed to the mat. “I raised Jonathan—I trained him myself. There was no better warrior.”

“Apparently,” Richie said, “there was.”

“But—” And Pennywise’s voice cracked, the first time Eddie had ever heard a flaw in the smooth, unruffled facade of that voice.

Richie took a step forward, nudging the blade an inch closer to Pennywise’s heart. “I have regretted not killing you every day since I let you go. My brother Georgie is dead because I didn’t kill you that day. Dozens, maybe hundreds, are dead because I stayed my hand. I

know your plan. I know you hope to slaughter almost every Shadowhunter in Derry. And I ask myself: How many more have to die before I do what I should have done on your ship?" The point of Richie's sword slipped lower, and then lower until it was resting over Pennywise's heart. Richie's face was calm, the face of an angel dispatching divine justice. "Do you have any last words?"

"Richard—"

"Last words," hissed Richie. "What are they?"

Pennywise raised his head. His black eyes as he looked at the boy in front of him were grave. "I'm sorry," he said. He stretched out a hand, as if he meant to reach out to Richie, even to touch him—his hand turned, palm up, the fingers opening—and then there was a silver flash and something flew by Eddie in the darkness like a bullet shot out of a gun. He felt displaced air brush his cheek as it passed, and then Pennywise had caught it out of the air, a long tongue of silver fire that flashed once in his hand as he brought it down.

It was the Mortal Sword. It left a tracery of black light on the air as Pennywise drove the blade of it into Richie's heart.

Richie's eyes flew wide. A look of disbelieving confusion passed over his face; he glanced down at himself, where Maellartach stuck grotesquely out of his chest—it looked more bizarre than horrible, like a prop from a nightmare that made no logical sense. Pennywise drew his hand back then, jerking the Sword out of Richie's chest the way he might have jerked a dagger from its scabbard; as if it had been all that was holding him up, Richie went to his knees. His sword slid from his grasp and hit the damp earth. He looked down at it in puzzlement, as if he had no idea why he had been holding it, or why he had let it go. He opened his mouth as if to ask the question, and blood poured over his chin, staining what was left of his ragged shirt.

Everything after that seemed to Eddie to happen very slowly, as if time were stretching itself out. He saw Pennywise sink to the ground and pull Richie onto his lap as if Richie were still very small and could be easily held.

Eddie couldn't move. Could barely breathe. He could hear his own

heart beating, hear the scrape of his breathing in his dry throat. From the corner of his eye he could see Pennywise standing by the edge of the lake, blood streaming from the blade of Maellartach and dripping into the bowl of the Mortal Cup. He was chanting words Eddie didn't understand. He didn't care to *try* to understand. It would all be over soon, and he was almost glad. He wondered if he had enough energy to drag himself over to where Richie lay, if he could lie down beside him and wait for it to be over. He stared at him, lying motionless on the churned, bloody sand. His eyes were closed, his face still; if it weren't for the gash across his chest, Eddie could have told himself he was asleep.

But he wasn't. Richie was a Shadowhunter; he had died in battle; he deserved the last benediction. *Ave atque vale*. His lips shaped the words, though they fell from his mouth in silent puffs of air. Halfway through, he stopped, his breath catching. What should he say? *Hail and farewell, Richie Tozier?*

His head whipped around, and he stared at the altar. The runes surrounding it had begun to glow. They were runes of summoning, runes of naming, and runes of binding. They were not unlike the runes that had kept Ithuriel imprisoned in the cellar beneath the Hanscom manor. Now very much against his will, he thought of the way Richie had looked at him then, the blaze of faith in his eyes, his belief in him. Stan had faith in him too, yet when he'd held Eddie, it had been as if Eddie were something fragile, something made of delicate glass. But Richie had held him with all the strength he had, never wondering if Eddie could take it—he'd known Eddie was as strong as he was.

Pennywise was dipping the bloody Sword over and over in the water of the lake now, chanting low and fast. The water of the lake was rippling, as if a giant hand were stroking fingers lightly across its surface.

Eddie closed his eyes. Remembering the way Richie had looked at him the night he'd freed Ithuriel, he couldn't help but imagine the way he'd look at him now if he saw him trying to lie down to die on the sand beside him. Richie wouldn't be touched, wouldn't think it was a beautiful gesture. He'd be angry at Eddie for giving up. He'd be so—disappointed.

Eddie lowered himself so that he was lying on the ground, heaving his dead legs behind him. Slowly, he crawled across the sand, pushing himself along with his knees and bound hands. The glowing band around his wrists burned and stung. His shirt tore as he dragged himself across the ground, and the sand scraped the bare skin of his stomach. He barely felt it. It was hard work, pulling himself along like this—sweat ran down his back, between his shoulder blades. When he finally reached the circle of runes, he was panting so loudly that he was terrified Pennywise would hear him.

But he didn't even turn around. He had the Mortal Cup in one hand and the Sword in the other. As Eddie watched, he drew his right hand back, spoke several words that sounded like Greek, and threw the Cup. It shone like a falling star as it hurtled toward the water of the lake and vanished beneath the surface with a faint splash.

The circle of runes was giving off a faint heat, like a partly banked fire. Eddie had to twist and struggle to reach his hand around to the stele jammed into his belt. The pain in his wrists spiked as his fingers closed around the handle; he pulled it free with a muffled gasp of relief.

He couldn't separate his wrists, so he gripped the stele awkwardly in both hands. He pushed himself up with his elbows, staring down at the runes. He could feel the heat of them on his face; they had begun to shimmer like witchlight. Pennywise had the Mortal Sword poised, ready to throw it; he was chanting the last words of the summoning spell. With a final burst of strength, Eddie drove the tip of the stele into the sand, not scraping aside the runes Pennywise had drawn but tracing his own pattern over them, writing a new rune over the one that symbolized his name. It was such a small rune, Eddie thought, such a small change—nothing like his immensely powerful Alliance rune, nothing like the Mark of Cain.

But it was all he could do. Spent, Eddie rolled onto his side as Pennywise drew his arm back and let the Mortal Sword fly.

Maellartach hurtled end over end, a black and silver blur that joined soundlessly with the black and silver lake. A great plume went up from the place where it splashed down: a flowering of platinum water. The plume rose higher and higher, a geyser of molten silver,

like rain falling upward. There was a great crashing noise, the sound of shattering ice, a glacier breaking—and then the lake seemed to blow apart, silver water exploding upward like a reverse hailstorm.

And rising with the hailstorm came the Angel. Eddie was not sure what he'd expected—something like Ithuriel, but Ithuriel had been diminished by many years of captivity and torment. This was an angel in the full force of his glory. As he rose from the water, Eddie's eyes began to burn as if he were staring into the sun.

Pennywise's hands had fallen to his sides. He was gazing upward with a rapt expression, a man watching his greatest dream become reality. "*Raziel*," he breathed.

The Angel continued to rise, as if the lake were sinking away, revealing a great column of marble at its center. First his head emerged from the water, streaming hair like chains of silver and gold. Then shoulders, white as stone, and then a bare torso—and Eddie saw that the Angel was Marked all over with runes just as the Nephilim were, although Raziel's runes were golden and alive, moving across his white skin like sparks flying from a fire. Somehow, at the same time, the Angel was both enormous and no bigger than a man: Eddie's eyes hurt trying to take all of him in, and yet he was all that he could see. As he rose, wings burst from his back and opened wide across the lake, and they were gold too, and feathered, and set into each feather was a single golden staring eye.

It was beautiful, and also terrifying. Eddie wanted to look away, but he wouldn't. He would watch it all. He would watch it for Richie, because he couldn't.

It's just like all those pictures, Eddie thought. The Angel rising from the lake, the Sword in one hand and the Cup in the other. Both were streaming water, but Raziel was dry as a bone, his wings undampened. His feet rested, white and bare, on the surface of the lake, stirring its waters into small ripples of movement. His face, beautiful and inhuman, gazed down at Pennywise.

And then he spoke.

His voice was like a cry and a shout and like music, all at once. It

contained no words, yet was totally comprehensible. The force of his breath nearly knocked Pennywise backward; he dug the heels of his boots into the sand, his head tilted back as if he were walking against a gale. Eddie felt the wind of the Angel's breath pass over him: It was hot like air escaping from a furnace, and smelled of strange spices.

It has been a thousand years since I was last summoned to this place, Raziel said. Jonathan Shadowhunter called on me then, and begged me to mix my blood with the blood of mortal men in a Cup and create a race of warriors who would rid this earth of demonkind. I did all that he asked and told him I would do no more. Why do you summon me now, Nephilim?

Pennywise's voice was eager. "A thousand years have passed, Glorious One, but demonkind are still here."

What is that to me? A thousand years for an angel pass between one blink of an eye and another.

"The Nephilim you created were a great race of men. For many years they valiantly battled to rid this plane of demon taint. But they have failed due to weakness and corruption in their ranks. I intend to return them to their former glory—"

Glory? The Angel sounded faintly curious, as if the word were strange to him. *Glory belongs to God alone.*

Pennywise didn't waver. "The Clave as the first Nephilim created it exists no more. They have allied themselves with Downworlders, the demon-tainted nonhumans who infest this world like fleas on the carcass of a rat. It is my intention to cleanse this world, to destroy every Downworlder along with every demon—"

Demons do not possess souls. But as for the creatures you speak of, the Children of Moon, Night, Lilith, and Faerie, all are souled. It seems that your rules as to what does and does not constitute a human being are stricter than our own. Eddie could have sworn the Angel's voice had taken on a dry tone. *Do you intend to challenge heaven, Shadowhunter?*

"Not to challenge heaven, no, Lord Raziel. To ally myself with heaven —"

In a war of your making? We are heaven, Shadowhunter. We do not fight in your mundane battles.

When Pennywise spoke again, he sounded almost hurt. “Lord Raziel. Surely you would not have allowed such a thing as a ritual by which you might be summoned to exist if you did not intend to be summoned. We Nephilim are your children. We need your guidance.”

Guidance? Now the Angel sounded amused. That hardly seems to be why you brought me here. You seek rather your own renown.

“Renown?” Pennywise echoed hoarsely. “I have given everything for this cause. My wife. My children. I have not withheld my sons. I have given everything I have for this—everything.”

The Angel simply hovered, gazing down at Pennywise with his weird, inhuman eyes. His wings moved in slow, undeliberate motions, like the passage of clouds across the sky. At last he said, *God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on an altar much like this one, to see who it was that Abraham loved more, Isaac or God. But you did not sacrifice your son, Robert.*

“If I must, I will compel this from you,” he said. “But I would rather have your willing cooperation.”

When Jonathan Shadowhunter summoned me, said the Angel, I gave him my assistance because I could see that his dream of a world free of demons was a true one. He imagined a heaven on this earth. But you dream only of your own glory, and you do not love heaven. My brother Ithuriel can attest to that.

Pennywise blanched. “But—”

Did you think that I would not know? The Angel smiled. It was the most terrible smile Eddie had ever seen. It is true that the master of the circle you have drawn can compel from me a single action. But you are not that master.

Pennywise stared. “My Lord Raziel—there is no one else—”

But there is, said the Angel. There is your other son.

Pennywise whirled. Eddie, lying half-conscious in the sand, his wrists and arms a screaming agony, stared defiantly back. For a moment their eyes met—and he looked at him, *really* looked at him, and Eddie realized it was the first time his father had ever looked him in the face and seen him. The first and only time.

“Edward,” he said. “What have you done?”

Eddie stretched out his hand, and with his finger he wrote in the sand at his feet. He didn’t draw runes. He drew words—the words Pennywise had said to him the first time he’d seen what he could do, when he’d drawn the rune that had destroyed his ship.

MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN.

His eyes widened, just as Richie’s eyes had widened before he’d died. Pennywise had gone bone white. He turned slowly to face the Angel, raising his hands in a gesture of supplication. “My Lord Raziel—”

The Angel opened his mouth and spat. Or at least that was how it seemed to Eddie—that the Angel spat, and that what came from his mouth was a shooting spark of white fire, like a burning arrow. The arrow flew straight and true across the water and buried itself in Pennywise’s chest. Or maybe “buried” wasn’t the word—it tore through him, like a rock through thin paper, leaving a smoking hole the size of a fist. For a moment, Eddie, staring up, could look through his father’s chest and see the lake and the fiery glow of the Angel beyond.

The moment passed. Like a felled tree, Pennywise crashed to the ground and lay still—his mouth open in a silent cry, his blind eyes fixed forever in a last look of incredulous betrayal.

That was the justice of heaven. I trust that you are not dismayed.

Eddie looked up. The Angel hovered over him, like a tower of white flame, blotting out the sky. His hands were empty; the Mortal Cup and Maellartach lay by the shore of the lake, lapped by the subsiding waves.

You can compel me to one action, Edward Gray. What is it that you

want?

Eddie opened his mouth. No sound came out.

Ah, yes, the Angel said, and there was gentleness in his voice now. The rune. The many eyes in his wings blinked. Something brushed over Eddie. It was soft, softer than silk or any other cloth, softer than a whisper or the brush of a feather. It was what he imagined clouds might feel like if they had a texture. A faint scent came with the touch—a pleasant scent, heady and sweet.

The pain vanished from his wrists. No longer bound together, his hands fell to his sides. The stinging at the back of his neck was gone too, and the heaviness from his legs. He struggled to his knees. More than anything, he wanted to crawl across the bloody sand toward the place where Richie's body lay, crawl to him and lie down beside him and put his arms around him, even though he was gone. But the Angel's voice compelled him; he remained where he was, staring up into his brilliant golden light.

The battle on Brocelind Plain is ending. Gray's hold over his demons vanished with his death. Already many are fleeing; the rest will soon be destroyed. There are Nephilim riding to the shores of this lake at this very moment. If you have a request, Shadowhunter, speak it now. The Angel paused. *And remember that I am not a genie. Choose your desire wisely.*

Eddie hesitated—only for a moment, but the moment stretched out as long as any moment ever had. He could ask for anything, he thought dizzily, anything—for Stan to be human, for Beverly to be human. But that sounded so selfish, it was a part of them now, he had no right to take it away from them. He could ask to end pain or world hunger or disease, or for peace on earth. But then again, perhaps these things weren't in the power of angels to grant, or they would already have been granted. And perhaps people were supposed to find these things for themselves.

It didn't matter, anyway. There was only one thing he could ask for, in the end, only one real choice.

Eddie raised his eyes to the Angel's.

“Richie,” he said.

The Angel’s expression didn’t change. Eddie had no idea whether Raziel thought his request a good one or a bad one, or whether—he thought with a sudden burst of panic—he intended to grant it at all.

Close your eyes, Edward Gray, the Angel said.

Eddie shut his eyes. You didn’t say no to an angel, no matter what it had in mind. His heart pounding, he sat floating in the darkness behind his eyelids, resolutely trying not to think of Richie. But his face appeared against the blank screen of his closed eyelids anyway—not smiling at him but looking sidelong, and he could see the scar at his temple, the uneven curl at the corner of his mouth, and the little scars on his forehead from the result of those infinite fights—all the marks and flaws and imperfections that made up the person Eddie loved most in the world. Richie. A bright light lit his vision to scarlet, and he fell back against the sand, wondering if he was going to pass out; or maybe he was dying—but he didn’t want to die, not now that he could see Richie’s face so clearly in front of him. He could almost hear his voice, too, saying his name. Eddie. Eddie. Eddie

“Eddie,” Richie said. “Open your eyes.”

He did.

He was lying on the sand, in his torn, wet, and bloodied clothes. That was the same. What was not the same was that the Angel was gone, and with him the blinding white light that had lit the darkness to day. Eddie was gazing up at the night sky, white stars like mirrors shining in the blackness, and leaning over him, the light in his eyes more brilliant than any of the stars, was Richie.

Eddie’s eyes drank him in, every part of him, from his tangled hair to his bloodstained, grimy face to his eyes shining through the layers of dirt; from the bruises visible through his torn sleeves to the gaping, blood-soaked tear down the front of his shirt, through which his bare skin showed—and there was no mark, no gash, to indicate where the Sword had gone in. Eddie could see the pulse beating in his throat, and almost threw his arms around him at the sight because it meant his heart was beating and that meant—

“You’re alive,” Eddie whispered. “Really alive.”

With a slow wonderment, Richie reached to touch his face. “I was in the dark,” he said softly. “There was nothing there but shadows, and I was a shadow, and I knew that I was dead, and that it was over, all of it. And then I heard your voice. I heard you say my name, and it brought me back.”

“Not me.” Eddie's throat tightened. “The Angel brought you back.”

“Because you asked him to.” Silently he traced the outline of Eddie's face with his fingers, as if reassuring himself that he was real. “You could have had anything else in the world, and you asked for me.”

Eddie smiled up at him. Filthy as he was, covered in blood and dirt, he was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. “But I don’t want anything else in the world.”

At that, the light in his eyes, already bright, went to such a blaze that Eddie could hardly bear to look at him. He thought of the Angel, and how he had burned like a thousand torches, and how that burning shone through Richie now, through his eyes, like light through the cracks in a door.

I love you, Eddie wanted to say. *And, I would do it again. I would always ask for you.* But those weren't the words he said.

“You’re an idiot,” he told him, a little breathlessly, as if, having realized he hadn't yet said them, he couldn't get the words out of his mouth fast enough. “You know that, right?”

Very slightly, through the grime and blood, Richie grinned. “Yes,” he said. “I know that.”

Notes for the Chapter:

sobs uncontrollably I'm so sad right now. Next is the epilogue :")c

30. Epilogue: Across the Sky in Stars

Notes for the Chapter:

Warning: This is really long.

Another warning: I cried.

Another warning: I'm still crying.

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Another warning: Did I said I cried already?

The smoke rose in a lazy spiral, tracing delicate line slack across the clear air. Ben, alone on the hill overlooking the cemetery, sat with his elbows on his knees and watched the smoke drift heavenward. The irony wasn't lost on him: These were his father's remains, after all.

He could see the bier from where he was sitting, obscured by smoke and flame, and the small group standing around it. He recognized Sonia's bright hair from here, and Jim standing beside her, his hand on her back. Sonia had her head turned aside, away from the burning pyre.

Ben could have been one of that group, had he wanted to be. He'd spent the last couple of days in the infirmary, and they'd only let him out this morning, partly so that he could attend Pennywise's funeral. But he'd gotten halfway to the pyre, a stacked pile of stripped wood, white as bones, and realized he could go no farther. He'd turned and walked up the hill instead, away from the mourners' procession. Jim had called after him, but Ben hadn't turned.

He'd sat and watched them gather around the bier, watched Neil Mayfield in his parchment white gear set the flame to the wood. It was the second time that week he'd watched a body burn, but Georgie's had been heartbreakingly small, and Pennywise was a big man—even flat on his back with his arms crossed over his chest, a seraph blade gripped in his fist. His eyes were bound with white silk, as was the custom. They had done well by him, Ben thought, despite everything.

They hadn't buried Henry. A group of Shadowhunters had gone back to the valley, but they hadn't found his body—washed away by the river, they'd told Ben, though he had his doubts.

A wind had come up and was blowing the smoke away from him. In the distance he could see the glimmering towers of Alicante, their former glory restored. He wasn't totally sure what he hoped to accomplish by sitting here and watching his father's body burn, or what he would say if he were down there among the mourners, speaking their last words to Pennywise. *You were never really my father*, he might say, or *You were the only father I ever knew*. Both statements were equally true, no matter how contradictory.

He half-closed his eyes and a flood of images washed across the backs of his eyelids: Pennywise picking him up off the grass in a sweeping hug; Pennywise holding him steady in the prow of a boat on a lake, showing him how to balance. And other, darker memories: Pennywise's hand cracking across the side of his face, a dead falcon.

"Ben."

He looked up. Jim was standing over him, a black silhouette outlined by the sun. He was wearing jeans and a flannel shirt as usual—no concessionary funeral white for him. "It's over," Jim said. "The ceremony. It was brief."

"I'm sure it was." Ben dug his fingers into the ground beside him, welcoming the painful scrape of dirt against his fingertips. "Did anyone say anything?"

"Just the usual words." Jim eased himself down onto the ground beside Ben, wincing a little. Ben hadn't asked him what the battle had been like; he hadn't really wanted to know. He knew it had been over much quicker than anyone had expected—after Pennywise's death, the demons he had summoned had fled into the night like so much mist burned off by the sun. But that didn't mean there hadn't been deaths. Pennywise hadn't been the only body burned in Alicante these past days.

"And Eddie wasn't—I mean, he didn't—"

"Come to the funeral? No. He didn't want to." Ben could feel Jim looking at him sideways. "You haven't seen him? Not since—"

"No, not since the lake," Ben said. "This was the first time they let me leave the hospital, and I had to come here."

"You didn't have to," Jim said. "You could have stayed away."

"I wanted to," Ben admitted. "Whatever that says about me."

"Funerals are for the living, Ben, not for the dead. Pennywise was more your father than Eddie's, even if you didn't share blood. You're the one who has to say good-bye. You're the one who will miss him."

"I didn't think I was *allowed* to miss him."

"You never knew Will Byers," said Jim. "And you came to Zack Denbrough when you were only barely still a child. Robert was the father of your childhood. You *should* miss him."

"I keep thinking about Keene," Ben said. "He was one of the only people who ever even knew there was a Byers baby that had lived. When I showed up at the Institute, he had no idea which of Pennywise's sons I was. The real one or the adopted one. And I could have been either. The demon or the angel. And the thing is, I don't think he ever knew, not until he saw Jonathan at the Gard and realized. So he just tried to do his best by me all those years anyway, until Pennywise showed up again. That took a sort of faith—don't you think?"

"Yes," Jim said. "I think so."

"Keene said he thought maybe upbringing might make a difference, regardless of blood. I just keep thinking—if I'd stayed with Pennywise, if he hadn't sent me to the Denbroughs, would I have been just like Jonathan? Is that how I'd be now?"

"Does it matter?" said Jim. "You are who you are now for a reason. And if you ask me, I think Pennywise sent you to the Denbroughs because he knew it was the best chance for you. Maybe he had other reasons too. But you can't get away from the fact that he sent you to people he knew would love you and raise you with love. It might

have been one of the few things he ever really did for someone else.” He clapped Ben on the shoulder, a gesture so paternal that it almost made Ben smile. “I wouldn’t forget about that, if I were you.”

Eddie, standing and looking out Bill’s window, watched smoke stain the sky over Alicante like a smudged hand against a window. They were burning Pennywise today, he knew; burning his father in the necropolis just outside the gates.

“You know about the celebration tonight, don’t you?”

Eddie turned to see Beverly, behind him, holding up two dresses against herself, one blue and one steel gray.

“What do you think I should wear?”

For Beverly, Eddie thought, clothes would always be therapy. “The blue one.”

Beverly laid the dresses down on the bed. “What are you going to wear? You are going, aren’t you?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “Maybe some jeans and my coat.”

“Boring,” Beverly said. She glanced over at Max, who was sitting in a chair by the bed, reading. “Don’t you think it’s boring?”

“I think you should let Eddie wear what he wants.” Max didn’t look up from her book. “Besides, it’s not like he’s dressing up for anyone.”

“He’s dressing up for Richie,” Beverly said, as if this were obvious. “As well he should.”

Max looked up, blinking in confusion, then smiled. “Oh, right. I keep forgetting. It must be weird, right, knowing he was brought back to life?”

“No,” Eddie said firmly. “This feels—right.” He looked back toward the window. “Not that I’ve really seen him since I found out. Not since we’ve been back in Alicante.”

“That’s strange,” said Max.

“It’s not strange,” Beverly said, shooting Max a meaningful look, which Max didn’t seem to notice. “He’s been in the hospital. He only got out today.”

“And he didn’t come to see you right away?” Max asked Eddie.

“He couldn’t,” Eddie said. “He went to the funeral.”

“Maybe,” said Max cheerfully. “Or maybe he’s not that interested in you anymore. Now that the drama is over. Some people only want what they can’t have.”

“I don’t think Richie is like that,” Beverly said.

Max stood up, dropping her book onto the bed. “I should go get dressed. See you guys tonight?” And with that, she wandered out of the room, humming to herself.

Beverly, watching her go, shook her head. “Do you think she doesn’t like you?” she said. “I mean, is she jealous? You said she seemed interested in Richie.”

“Ha!” Eddie was briefly amused. “No, she’s not interested in Richie. I think she’s just one of those people who say whatever they’re thinking whenever they think it. And who knows, maybe she’s right.”

Beverly pulled the pin from her hair, letting it fall down around her shoulders. She came across the room and joined Eddie at the window. The sky was clear now past the demon towers; the smoke was gone. “Do you think she’s right?”

“I don’t know.”

There was a knock on the door, a soft one, as if whoever was knocking didn’t want to be intruding.

“Come in,” Eddie said.

It was Bill, wearing a black T-shirt and dark jeans, Eddie thought it was the first time he ever saw Bill wearing jeans. He looked slightly

uncomfortable. “C-can I use my room now?”

Beverly turned around and gathered the dresses. “Of course. I’ll leave.” She headed towards the doorway and whispered something to Bill, and he nodded quickly. That was weird, Eddie thought.

Bill entered the room and closed the door behind him. “Hey.”

“Hey,” Eddie said, frowning a little. “What were you and Beverly up to?”

Bill cleared his throat. “Nothing important.” he sat on the bed. “Have you seen Stan?”

“Stan?” Eddie frowned. “Yeah, he was hanging around with Mike. Why?”

He shrugged and played with his fingers, a clear sign of nervousness. “Just curious.”

“Do you need privacy?” Eddie said. “I can leave if—”

“No. No.” Bill said. “A-actually, I wanted to talk to you.”

“Sure,” Eddie nodded. “What is it?”

Bill bit his lip. “H-how did you realize you were in love with Richie?”

Eddie almost jumped at the question. “*What?*”

“I just...” Bill held a hand up, then he lowered it. “I always w-wanted to know.”

“I—” Eddie guessed there was no point in denying it now, he sighed. “I don’t know exactly how or when. I guess it was after Ben and I found Pennywise at Renwick’s. I saw him outside the Institute, with his motorcycle and there was just this feeling of...” Eddie was sure he looked like a tomato. “Of feeling safe.”

Bill arched his eyebrows. Then he nodded.

“Now tell me,” Eddie headed towards the bed and sat beside Bill, he

was blushing too. "Why did you want to know that?"

"I..." Bill shrugged. "It's hard to explain."

"Just say it."

Bill lowered his eyelashes. "I think I like someone."

Eddie opened his mouth in surprise, then closed it. "Oh, I never thought I'd live to see that." He chuckled. "Who is it?"

Bill wasn't looking at him. He shook his head. "Not a chance."

"Oh, come on," Eddie hit playfully at his arm. "I told you all about Richie, it's only fair."

"What if it's a mistake?" Bill said. "What if...What if I s-screw it up?"

"Bill," Eddie shook his head. "It doesn't matter, we all screw things up. One thing I learned from that night at the lake was that I could die at any moment. It's all about taking risks. And we shouldn't worry about what we do because there's going to be a point where we realize what we *haven't* done and we'll be ashamed the rest of our lives."

Bill seemed to have paid attention to every word. "I think I know w-what I want, but...there's just this part of me that—"

"Is afraid." Eddie finished. "I know." he sighed. "I think I know who you're talking about, but I won't push you anymore. So I'll tell you something, if you feel like you're ready, tell that person how you feel about them tonight, I'll tell Richie that too."

Bill seemed unconvinced, but he nodded reluctantly. "Deal."

"But for telling Richie I'll need to see him tonight at the party. Or the victory celebration or whatever it's called." He looked up at Bill. "Do you know what it'll be like?"

"There'll be a parade," Bill said, "and fireworks, p-probably. Music, dancing, games, that sort of thing. Like a b-big street fair in New York." He glanced out the window, his expression wistful. "Georgie

would have loved it.”

Eddie reached out and stroked Bill's hair, the way he'd stroke the hair of his own brother. “I know he would.”

Ben had to knock twice at the door of the old canal house before he heard quick footsteps hurrying to answer; his heart jumped, and then settled as the door opened and Amatis Byers stood on the threshold, looking at him in surprise. She looked as if she'd been getting ready for the celebration: She wore a long dove gray dress and pale metallic earrings that picked out the silvery streaks in her graying hair. “Yes?”

“Eddie,” he began, and stopped, unsure what exactly to say. Where had his eloquence gone? He'd always had that, even when he hadn't had anything else, but now he felt as if he'd been ripped open and all the clever, facile words had poured out of him, leaving him empty. “I was wondering if Eddie was here. I was hoping to talk to him.”

Amatis shook her head. The blankness had gone from her expression, and she was looking at him intently enough to make him nervous. “He's not. I think he's with the Denbroughs.”

“Oh.” He was surprised at how disappointed he felt. “Sorry to have bothered you.”

“It's no bother. I'm glad you're here, actually,” she said briskly. “There was something I wanted to talk to you about. Come into the hall; I'll be right back.”

Ben stepped inside as she disappeared down the hallway. He wondered what on earth she could have to talk to him about.

Amatis was back in a moment. She was clutching a small metal box in her hands. It was a delicate object, chased with a design of birds. “Ben,” Amatis said. “Jim told me that you're Will's—that Will Byers was your father. He told me everything that happened.”

Ben nodded, which was all he felt called on to do. The news was leaking out slowly, which was how he liked it; hopefully he'd be back in New York before everyone in Derry knew and was constantly

staring at him.

"You know I was married to Will before your mother was," Amatis went on, her voice tight, as if the words hurt to say. Ben stared at her—was this about his mother? Did she resent him for bringing up bad memories of a woman who'd died before he was even born? "Of all the people alive today, I probably knew your father best."

"Yes," Ben said, wishing he were elsewhere. "I'm sure that's true."

"I know you probably have feelings about him that are very mixed," she said, surprising him mainly because it was true. "You never knew him. He wasn't the man who raised you. You don't even look like him, except for your brown hair—but those eyes of yours ... I don't know where you get those. So maybe I'm being crazy, bothering you with this. Maybe you don't really want to know about Will at all. But he was your father, and if he'd known you—" She thrust the box at him then, nearly making him jump back. "These are some things of his that I saved over the years. Letters he wrote, photographs, a family tree. His witchlight stone. Maybe you don't have questions now, but someday perhaps you will, and when you do—when you do, you'll have this." She stood still, giving him the box as if she were offering him a precious treasure. Ben reached out and took it from her without a word; it was heavy, and the metal was cold against his skin.

"Thank you," he said. It was the best he could do. He hesitated, and then said, "There is one thing. Something I've been wondering."

"Yes?"

"If Will was my father, then the Inquisitor—Joyce—was my grandmother."

"She was ..." Amatis paused. "A very difficult woman. But yes, she was your grandmother."

"She saved my life," said Ben. "I mean, for a long time she acted like she hated my guts. But then she saw this." He drew the collar of his shirt aside, showing Amatis the white star-shaped scar on his shoulder. "And she saved my life. But what could my scar possibly

mean to her?”

Amatis's eyes had gone wide. “You don't remember getting that scar, do you?”

Ben shook his head. “Pennywise told me it was an injury from when I was too young to remember, but now—I don't think I believe him.”

“It's not a scar. It's a birthmark. There's an old family legend about it, that one of the first Byers to become a Shadowhunter was visited by an angel in a dream. The angel touched him on the shoulder, and when he woke up, he had a mark like that. And all his descendants have it as well.” She shrugged. “I don't know if the story is true, but all the Byers have the mark. Your father had one too, here.” She touched her right upper arm. “They say it means you've had contact with an angel. That you're blessed, in some way. Joyce must have seen the mark and guessed who you really were.”

Ben stared at Amatis, but he wasn't seeing her: He was seeing that night on the ship; the wet, black deck and the Inquisitor dying at his feet. “She said something to me,” he said. “While she was dying. She said, ‘Your father would be proud of you.’ I thought she was being cruel. I thought she meant Pennywise....”

Amatis shook her head. “She meant Will,” she said softly. “And she was right. He would have been.”

Eddie pushed open Amatis's front door and stepped inside, thinking how quickly the house had become familiar to him. He no longer had to strain to remember the way to the front door, or the way the knob stuck slightly as he pushed it open. The glint of sunlight off the canal was familiar, as was the view of Alicante through the window. He could almost imagine living here, almost imagine what would be like if Derry were home. He wondered what he'd start missing first. Chinese takeout? Netflix? Midtown Comics?

He was about to head for the stairs when he heard his mother's voice from the living room—sharp, and slightly agitated. But what could Sonia have to be upset about? Everything was fine now, wasn't it?

Without thinking, Eddie dropped back against the wall near the living room door and listened.

“What do you mean, you’re staying?” Sonia was saying. “You mean you’re not coming back to New York at all?”

“I’ve been asked to remain in Alicante and represent the werewolves on the Council,” Jim said. “I told them I’d let them know tonight.”

“Couldn’t someone else do that? One of the pack leaders here in Derry?”

“I’m the only pack leader who was once a Shadowhunter. That’s why they want me.” He sighed. “I started all this, Sonia. I should stay here and see it out.”

There was a short silence. “If that’s how you feel, then of course you should stay,” Sonia said at last, but her voice didn’t sound sure.

“I’ll have to sell the bookstore. Get my affairs in order.” Jim sounded gruff. “It’s not like I’ll be moving right away.”

“I can take care of that. After everything you’ve done ...” Sonia didn’t seem to have the energy to maintain her bright tone. Her voice trailed off into silence, a silence that stretched out so long that Eddie thought about clearing his throat and walking into the living room to let them know he was there.

A moment later he was glad he hadn’t. “Look,” Jim said, “I’ve wanted to tell you this for a long time, but I didn’t. I knew it would never matter, even if I did say it, because of what I am. You never wanted that to be part of Eddie’s life. But he knows now, so I guess it doesn’t make a difference. And I might as well tell you. I love you, Sonia. I have for twenty years.” He paused. Eddie strained to hear his mother’s response, but Sonia was silent. At last Jim spoke again, his voice heavy. “I have to get back to the Council and tell them I’ll stay. We don’t ever have to talk about this again. I just feel better having said it after all this time.”

Eddie pressed himself back against the wall as Jim, his head down, stalked out of the living room. He brushed by him without seeming to

see him at all and yanked the front door open. He stood there for a moment, staring blindly out at the sunshine bouncing off the water of the canal. Then he was gone, the door slamming shut behind him.

Eddie stood where he was, his back against the wall. He felt terribly sad for Jim, and terribly sad for his mother, too. It looked like Sonia really didn't love Jim, and maybe never could. It was just like it had been for him and Stan, except he didn't see any way that Jim and his mother could fix things. Not if he was going to stay here in Derry. Tears stung his eyes. He was about to turn and go into the living room, when he heard the sound of the kitchen door opening and another voice. This one sounded tired, and a little resigned. Amatis.

"Sorry I overheard that, but I'm glad he's staying," Jim's sister said. "Not just because he'll be near me but because it gives him a chance to get over you."

Sonia sounded defensive. "Amatis—"

"It's been a long time, Sonia," Amatis said. "If you don't love him, you ought to let him go."

Sonia was silent. Eddie wished he could see his mother's expression—did she look sad? Angry? Resigned?

Amatis gave a little gasp. "Unless—you *do* love him?"

"Amatis, I can't—"

"You do! You *do*!" There was a sharp sound, as if Amatis had clapped her hands together. "I knew you did! I always knew it!"

"It doesn't matter." Sonia sounded tired. "It wouldn't be fair to Jim."

"I don't want to hear it." There was a rustling noise, and Sonia made a sound of protest. Eddie wondered if Amatis had actually grabbed hold of his mother. "If you love him, you go right now and tell him. Right now, before he goes to the Council."

"But they want him to be their Council member! And he wants to—"

"All Jim wants," said Amatis firmly, "is *you*. You and Eddie. That's all

he ever wanted. Now go.”

Before Eddie had a chance to move, Sonia dashed out into the hallway. She headed toward the door—and saw Eddie, flattened against the wall. Halting, she opened her mouth in surprise.

“Eddie!” She sounded as if she was trying to make her voice bright and cheerful, and failing miserably. “I didn’t realize you were here.”

Eddie stepped away from the wall, grabbed hold of the doorknob, and threw the door wide open. Bright sunlight poured into the hall. Sonia stood blinking in the harsh illumination, her eyes on his son.

“If you don’t go after Jim,” Eddie said, enunciating very clearly, “I, personally, will kill you.”

For a moment Sonia looked astonished. Then she smiled. “Well,” she said, “if you put it like that.”

A moment later she was out of the house, hurrying down the canal path toward the Accords Hall. Eddie shut the door behind her and leaned against it.

Amatis, emerging from the living room, darted past him to lean on the windowsill, glancing anxiously out through the pane. “Do you think she’ll catch him before he gets to the Hall?”

“My mom’s spent her whole life chasing me around,” Eddie said. “She moves fast.”

The streets were already beginning to fill with people as Eddie walked back through the city toward the Denbroughs’ house. It was twilight, and the lights were beginning to go on, filling the air with a pale glow. Bunches of familiar-looking white flowers hung from baskets on the walls, filling the air with their spicy smells. Dark gold fire-runes burned on the doors of the houses he passed; the runes spoke of victory and rejoicing.

There were Shadowhunters out in the streets. None were wearing gear—they were in a variety of finery, from the modern to what

bordered on historical costumery. It was an unusually warm night, so few people were wearing coats, but there were plenty of women in what looked to Eddie like ball gowns, their full skirts sweeping the streets. A slim dark figure cut across the road ahead of him as he turned onto the Denbroughs' street, and he saw that it was Adrian, hand in hand with a tall dark-haired woman in a red cocktail dress. He glanced over his shoulder and smiled at Eddie, a smile that sent a little shiver over him, and he thought that it was true that there really was something alien about Downworlders sometimes, something alien and frightening. Perhaps it was just that everything that was frightening wasn't necessarily also bad.

Although, he had his doubts about Adrian.

The front door of the Denbroughs' house was open, and several of the family were already standing out on the pavement. Zack and Sharon Denbrough were there, chatting with two other adults; when they turned, Eddie saw with slight surprise that it was the Mayfields, Max's parents. Sharon smiled at him past them; she was elegant in a dark blue silk suit, her hair tied back from her severe face with a thick silver band. She looked like Bill—so much so that Eddie wanted to reach out and put a hand on his shoulder. Sharon still seemed so sad, even as she smiled, and Eddie thought, *She's remembering Georgie, just like Bill was, and thinking how much he would have liked all this.*

"Eddie!" Beverly bounded down the front steps, her red hair flying behind her. She was wearing neither of the outfits she'd showed to Eddie earlier, but an incredible gold satin dress that hugged her body like the closed petals of a flower. Her shoes were spiked sandals, and Eddie remembered what Beverly had once said about how she liked her heels, and laughed to himself. "You look *great*."

"Thanks." Eddie tugged a little self-consciously at the diaphanous material of the silver suit. It was probably the most formal thing he'd ever worn. "You too."

Beverly bent over to whisper in his ear. "Richie isn't here."

Eddie pulled back. "Then where—?"

"Ben says he might be at the square, where the fireworks are going to

be. I'm sorry."

Eddie shrugged, trying to hide his disappointment. "It's okay."

Bill and Max tumbled out of the house after Beverly, Max in a bright red dress that made her hair look shockingly bright. Bill had dressed like he usually did, in a sweater and dark pants, though Eddie had to admit that at least the sweater didn't appear to have any visible holes in it. He smiled at Eddie, and he thought, with surprise, that actually he did look different. Lighter somehow, as if a weight were off his shoulders.

"I've never been to a celebration that had Downworlders at it before," said Max, looking nervously down the street, where a dark skinned boy was plucking some of the white blossoms out of a hanging basket, looking at them thoughtfully, then throwing them away. Eddie recognized him as Lucas, Mike's friend.

"Hey!" Beverly said, and Eddie looked up to see Stan and Mike coming toward the street. He hadn't seen Stan for most of the day; he'd gone down to the Hall to observe the preliminary Council meeting because, he said, he was curious whom they'd choose to hold the vampires' Council seat. Eddie couldn't imagine Mike wearing anything as formal as a suit, and indeed he was clad in low-slung camo pants and a black T-shirt that said CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON and had a design of dice under the words. It was a gamer shirt, Eddie thought, wondering if Mike was really a gamer or was wearing the T-shirt to impress Beverly. If so, it was a good choice. "You heading back down to Angel Square?"

Mike and Stan acknowledged that they were, and they headed toward the Hall together in a companionable group. Stan dropped back to fall into step beside Eddie, and they walked together in silence. It was good just to be close to Stan again—he had been the first person he'd wanted to see once he was back in Alicante. He'd hugged him very tightly, glad he was alive, and touched the Mark on his forehead.

"Did it save you?" he'd asked, desperate to hear that he hadn't done what he had to him for no reason.

"It saved me," was all Stan had said in reply.

"I wish I could take it off you," he'd said. "I wish I knew what might happen to you because of it."

"We'll wait," Stan had said. "And we'll see."

He'd been watching Stan closely, but Eddie had to admit that the Mark didn't seem to be affecting him in any visible way. He seemed just as he always had. Just like Stan. Only he'd taken to brushing his hair slightly differently, to cover the Mark; if you didn't already know it was there, you'd never guess.

"How was the meeting?" Eddie asked him now, giving him a once-over to see if he'd dressed up for the celebration. He hadn't, but he hardly blamed him—the jeans and T-shirt he had on were all he had to wear. "Who'd they choose?"

"Not Adrian," Stan said, sounding as if he was pleased about it. "Some other vampire. He had a pretentious name. Nightshade or something."

"You know, they asked me if I wanted to draw the symbol of the New Council," Eddie said. "It's an honor. I said I'd do it. It's going to have the rune of the Council surrounded by the symbols of the four Downworlder families. A moon for the werewolves, and I was thinking a four-leaf clover for the faeries. A spell book for the warlocks. But I can't think of anything for the vampires."

"How about a fang?" Stan suggested. "Maybe dripping blood." He bared his teeth.

"Thank you," Eddie said. "That's very helpful."

"I'm glad they asked you," Stan said, more seriously. "You deserve the honor. You deserve a medal, really, for what you did. The Alliance rune and everything."

Eddie shrugged. "I don't know. I mean, the battle barely went on for ten minutes, after all that. I don't know how much I helped."

"I was in that battle, Eddie" Stan said. "It may have been about ten

minutes long, but it was the worst ten minutes of my life. And I don't really want to talk about it. But I will say that even in that ten minutes, there would have been a lot more death if it hadn't been for you. Besides, the battle was only part of it. If you hadn't done what you did, there would be no New Council. We would be Shadowhunters and Downworlders, hating each other, instead of Shadowhunters and Downworlders, going to a party together."

Eddie felt a lump rising in his throat and stared straight ahead, willing himself not to tear up. "Thanks, Stan." He hesitated, so briefly that no one who wasn't Simon would have noticed it. But he did.

"What's wrong?" Stan asked him.

"I'm just wondering what we do when we get back home," he said. "I mean, I know Eleven took care of your mom so she hasn't been freaking out that you're gone, but—school. We've missed a ton of it. And I don't even know ..."

"You're not going back," Stan said quietly. "You think I don't know that? You're a Shadowhunter now. You'll finish up your education at the Institute."

"And what about you? You're a vampire. Are you just going to go back to high school?"

"Yeah," Stan said, surprising him. "I am. I want a normal life, as much as I can have one. I want high school, and college, and all of that."

He squeezed his hand. "Then you should have it."

"And to think," Beverly came across Stan. "That *all of this* happened because I wanted a night of drinks at Pandemonium."

The three of them laughed, Eddie could hear Mike giggling in the background, even when he didn't have any idea of what they were saying.

"Thank you, Bev." Eddie said. "When we get back, let's make Pandemonium our own sacred place."

“Not a bad idea.” said Stan.

Eddie smiled sadly, wondering if he was about to cry. “Best idea ever.” He wanted to say something else to them, about how their friendship was the best thing that had ever happened to him, and how he wouldn't be where he was standing right now if it weren't for them. But didn't, he guessed they already knew this. He looked around for Richie as he heard Stan and Beverly argue about some movie she loved but he hated, time to time Beverly would make Bill join the conversation. Eddie kept looking at the groups of people around them, none of them were tall and black haired. And he was about to give up when something, *someone*, caught his attention.

Standing at the very edge of the glamourised forest, where shadow blended into light, was a slender woman in a green dress the color of leaves, her long scarlet hair bound back by a golden circlet.

The Seelie Queen. She was looking directly at Eddie, and as Eddie met her gaze, she lifted up a slender hand and beckoned. *Come*.

Whether it was his own desire or the strange compulsion of the Fair Folk, Eddie wasn't sure, but with a murmured excuse, he stepped away from the others and made his way to the edge of the forest, wending his way through riotous partygoers. He became aware, as he drew close to the Queen, of a preponderance of faeries standing very near them, in a circle around their Lady. Even if she wanted to appear alone, the Queen was not without her courtiers.

The Queen held up an imperious hand. “There,” she said. “And no closer.”

Eddie, a few steps from the Queen, paused. “My lady,” he said, remembering the formal way that Ben had addressed the Queen inside her Court. “Why do you call me to your side?”

“I would have a favor from you,” said the Queen without preamble. “And of course, I would promise a favor in return.”

“A favor from *me*?” Eddie said wonderingly. “But—you don't even like me.”

The Queen touched her lips thoughtfully with a single long white finger. "The Fair Folk, unlike humans, do not concern themselves overmuch with *liking*. Love, perhaps, and hate. Both are useful emotions. But *liking* ..." She shrugged elegantly. "The Council has not yet chosen which of our folk they would like to sit upon their seat," she said. "I know that Jimothy Hopper is like a father to you. He would listen to what you asked him. I would like you to ask him if they would choose my knight Meliorn for the task."

Eddie thought back to the Accords Hall, and Meliorn saying he did not want to fight in the battle unless the Night Children fought as well. "I don't think Jimothy likes him very much."

"And again," said the Queen, "you speak of *liking*."

"When I saw you before, in the Seelie Court," Eddie said, "you called Ben and me brothers. But you knew we weren't really brothers. Didn't you?"

The Queen smiled. "The same blood runs in your veins," she said. "The blood of the Angel. All those who bear the Angel's blood are siblings under the skin."

Eddie shivered. "You could have told us the truth, though. And you didn't."

"I told you the truth as I saw it. We all tell the truth as we see it, do we not? Did you ever stop to wonder what untruths might have been in the tale your mother told you, that served her purpose in telling it? Do you truly think you know each and every secret of your past?"

Eddie hesitated. Without knowing why, he suddenly heard Madame Dorothea's voice in his head. *You'll fall in love with the wrong person*, the hedge-witch had said to Richie. Eddie had come to assume that Dorothea had only been referring to how much trouble Richie's affection for Eddie would bring them both. But still, there were blanks, he knew, in his memory—even now, things, events, that had not come back to him. Secrets whose truths he'd never know. He had given them up for lost and unimportant, but perhaps—

No. He felt his hands tighten at his sides. The Queen's poison was a

subtle one, but powerful. Was there anyone in the world who could truly say they knew every secret about themselves? And weren't some secrets better left alone?

He shook his head. "What you did in the Court," he said. "Perhaps you didn't lie. But you were unkind." He started to turn away. "And I have had enough unkindness."

"Would you truly refuse a favor from the Queen of the Seelie Court?" the Queen demanded. "Not every mortal is granted such a chance."

"I don't need a favor from you," Eddie said. "I have everything I want."

He turned his back on the Queen and walked away.

Nancy Harrington and her husband sat at the farthest table in the corner and watched as Zack Denbrough's fingers danced over the keys of the piano. Zack wore no tie and his shirt was partly unbuttoned, his face a study in concentration as he abandoned himself to the music with a passion.

"Chopin." Nancy identified the music with a soft smile. "I wonder—I wonder if Richard will play the violin someday."

"Careful," her companion said with a laugh in his voice. "You can't force these things."

"It's hard," she said, turning to look at Steve earnestly. "I remember you said this war was a story of Denbroughs and Wheelers and Hendersons, and it is, and Hanscoms and Toziers as well and it's amazing to see them. But when I do, it's as if I see the past that stretches out behind them. I watch Zack Denbrough play, and I see the ghosts that rise up in the music. Don't you?"

"Ghosts are memories, and we carry them because those we love do not leave the world."

"Yes," she said. "I just wish *he* were here to see this with us, just here with us one more time."

She felt the rough silk of his dark hair as he bent to kiss her fingers lightly—a courtly gesture from a bygone age. “Jonathan is with us, Nancy. He can see us. I believe it. I feel it, the way I used to know sometimes if he was sad or angry or lonely or happy.”

She touched the pearl bracelet at her wrist, and then his face, with light, adoring fingers. “And what is he now?” she whispered. “Happy or wistful or sad or lonely? Do not tell me he is lonely. For you must know. You always knew.”

“He is happy, Nancy. It gives him joy to see us together, as it always gave me joy to see the two of you.” He smiled, that smile that had all the truth of the world in it, and slid his fingers from hers as he sat back. Two figures were approaching their table: a tall, brown-headed woman, and a boy with the same dark hair and eyes. “And speaking of the past,” he said, “I think there’s someone here who wants to talk to you.”

Eddie was watching Mews with amusement, he had no idea where the damned cat came from, when his mother sidled up to him. The cat had been festooned with bells and, in a vengeful rage, was gnawing a hole in one of the piano legs.

“Eddie!” His mother was smiling at him—and Jim stood beside her, his hand in hers. Sonia wasn’t dressed up at all; she wore jeans, and a loose shirt that at least wasn’t stained with paint. You couldn’t have told from the way Jim was looking at her, though, that she looked anything less than perfect. “I’m glad we finally found you.”

Eddie grinned at Jim. “So you’re *not* moving to Derry, I take it?”

“Nah,” he said. He looked as happy as he’d ever seen him. “The pizza here is terrible.”

Sonia laughed and moved off to talk to Amatis, who was admiring a floating glass bubble filled with smoke that kept changing colors. Eddie looked at Jim. “Were you ever *actually* going to leave New York, or were you just saying that to get her to finally make a move?”

“Eddie,” said Jim, “I am shocked that you would suggest such a thing.” He grinned, then abruptly sobered. “You’re all right with it, aren’t you? I know this means a big change in your life—I was going to see if you and your mother might want to move in with me, since your apartment’s unlivable right now—”

Eddie snorted. “A big change? My life has already changed totally. Several times.”

Jim glanced over toward Stan and Beverly, who were watching them from their seat on the wall. Jim nodded at them, his mouth curling up at the corner in an amused smile. “I guess it has,” he said.

“Change is good,” said Eddie.

Jim held his hand up; the Alliance rune had faded, as it had for everyone, but his skin still bore the white telltale trace of it, the scar that would never entirely disappear. He looked thoughtfully at the Mark. “So it is.”

Sonia came back and gripped Eddie’s arm enthusiastically.

“Mom,” Eddie said suspiciously. “What are you up to?”

His mother stroked his hair, looking fond. “There’s someone I want you to meet,” she said, taking Eddie’s hand. “It’s time.”

“Time? Time for what?” Eddie let himself be pulled along, only half-protesting, to a white-draped table in the corner of the tent. At it sat the brown-haired girl he had seen earlier. The girl looked up as Eddie approached. A man with dark hair was rising from her side; he gave Eddie a soft smile and moved across the room to talk to Eleven, who had come down from the hill.

“Eddie,” Sonia said. “I want you to meet Nancy.”

Beverly cut through the edge of the glamour forest to cross the square, weaving in and out of the shadows. The trees reached up to the foot of the Hall stairs, which was probably why the steps were almost deserted. Though not entirely. Glancing toward the doors, she

could make out a familiar dark outline, seated in the shadow of a pillar. Her heart quickened.

Ben.

She had to gather her skirt up in her hands to climb the stairs, afraid she'd step on and tear the delicate material. She almost wished she had worn her normal clothes as she approached Ben, who was sitting with his back to a pillar, staring out over the square. He wore his most mundane clothes—jeans, a white shirt, and a dark jacket over them. And for almost the first time since she'd met him, she thought, he didn't seem to be carrying any weapons.

She abruptly felt overdressed. She stopped a slight distance away from him, suddenly unsure what to say.

As if sensing her there, Ben looked up. He was holding something balanced in his lap, she saw, a silvery box. He looked tired. There were shadows under his eyes, and his pale gold hair was untidy. His eyes widened. "Beverly?"

"Who else would it be?"

He didn't smile. "You don't look like you."

"It's the dress." She smoothed her hands down the material self-consciously. "I don't usually wear things this ... pretty."

"You always look beautiful," he said, and she remembered the first time he'd called her beautiful, at the Institute. He hadn't said it like it was a compliment, but just as if it were an accepted fact, like the fact that she had red hair and liked videogames. "But you look—distant. Like I couldn't touch you."

She came over then and sat down next to him on the wide top step. The stone was cold through the material of her dress. She held her hand out to him; it was shaking slightly, just enough to be visible. "Touch me," she said. "If you want to."

He took her hand and laid it against his cheek for a moment. Then he set it back down in her lap. Beverly shivered a little.

"What's in the box?" she asked. He was still clutching the silver rectangle tightly in one hand. It was an expensive-looking object, delicately carved with a pattern of birds.

"I went to Amatis's earlier today, looking for Eddie," he said. "But he wasn't there. So I talked to Amatis. She gave me this." He indicated the box. "It belonged to my father."

For a moment she just looked at him uncomprehendingly. *This was Pennywise's?* she thought, and then, with a jolt, *No, that's not what he means.* "Of course," she said. "Amatis was married to Will Byers."

"I've been going through it," he said. "Reading the letters, the journal pages. I thought if I did that, I might feel some sort of connection to him. Something that would leap off the pages at me, saying, *Yes, this is your father.* But I don't feel anything. Just bits of paper. Anyone could have written these things."

"Ben," she said softly.

"And that's another thing," he said. "I don't have a name anymore, do I? I'm not Jonathan—that was someone else. But it's the name I'm used to. Pennywise always called me Jonathan. And that's what they called me when I first got to the Institute. I was never supposed to think my name was Jonathan Benjamin, you know—that was an accident. I got the name out of my father's journal, but it wasn't me he was talking about. It wasn't my progress he was recording. It was Hen—It was Jonathan's. So the first time I ever told Sharon that my middle name was Benjamin, she told herself that she'd just remembered wrong, and Benjamin had been Daniel's son's middle name. It had been ten years, after all. But that was when she started calling me Ben: It was like she wanted to give me a new name, something that belonged to her, to my life in New York. And I liked it. I'd never liked Jonathan." He turned the box over in his hands. "I wonder if maybe Sharon knew, or guessed, but just didn't want to know. She loved me ... and she didn't want to believe it."

"Which is why she was so upset when she found out you *were* Pennywise's son," said Beverly. "Because she thought she ought to have known. She kind of did know. But we never do want to believe things like that about people we love. And, Ben, she was right

about you. She was right about who you really are. And you do have a name. Your name is Ben. Pennywise didn't give that name to you. Sharon did. The only thing that makes a name important, and yours, is that it's given to you by someone who loves you."

"Ben what?" he said. "Ben Byers? Jonathan Byers?"

"Oh, please," she said. "You're Ben *Denbrough*. You know that."

He raised his eyes to hers. His lashes shadowed them thickly, darkening the gold. She thought he looked a little less remote, though perhaps she was imagining it.

"Maybe you're a different person than you thought you were," she went on, hoping against hope that he understood what she meant. "But no one becomes a totally different person overnight. Just finding out that Will was your biological father isn't going to automatically make you love him. And you don't have to. Pennywise wasn't your real father, but not because you don't have his blood in your veins. He wasn't your real father because he didn't act like a father. He didn't take care of you. It's always been the Denbroughs who have taken care of you. They're your family. Just like Eddie and Stan are mine." She reached to touch his shoulder, then drew her hand back. "I'm sorry," she said. "Here I am lecturing you, and you probably came up here to be alone."

"You're right," he said.

Beverly felt the breath go out of her. "All right, then. I'll go." She stood up, forgetting to hold her dress up, and nearly stepped on the hem.

"Beverly!" Setting the box down, Ben scrambled to his feet. "Beverly, wait. That wasn't what I meant. I didn't mean I wanted to be alone. I meant you were right about Pennywise—about the Denbroughs—"

She turned and looked at him. He was standing half in and half out of the shadows, the bright, colored lights of the party below casting strange patterns across his skin. She thought of the first time she'd seen him. She'd thought he looked like a lion. Beautiful and deadly. He looked different to her now. That hard, defensive casing he wore

like armor was gone, and he wore his injuries instead, visibly and proudly. He hadn't even used his stele to take away the bruises on his face, along the line of his jaw, at his throat where the skin showed above the collar of his shirt. But he looked beautiful to her still, more than before, because now he seemed human—human, and real.

He took a step toward her. His gaze was fastened on her face, as if he couldn't look away. "I always thought love made you stupid. Made you weak. A bad Shadowhunter. *To love is to destroy*. I believed that."

She bit her lip, but she couldn't look away from him, either.

"I used to think being a good warrior meant not caring," he said. "About anything, myself especially. I took every risk I could. I flung myself in the path of demons. I think I gave Bill a complex about what kind of fighter he was, just because he wanted to live." Ben smiled unevenly. "And then I met you. You were a mundane. Weak. Not a fighter. And then I saw how much you loved Eddie, loved Stan, and how you'd walk into hell to save them. You did want walk into that vampire hotel. Shadowhunters with a decade of experience wouldn't have tried that. Love didn't make you weak; it made you stronger than anyone I'd ever met. And I realized I was the one who was weak."

"No." She was shocked. "You're not."

"I never dared to give much of myself to anyone before—bits of myself to the Denbroughs, to Richie and Bill, but it took years to do it—but, Beverly, since the first time I saw you, I have belonged to you completely. And this might be rushed, this might be a mistake, but I'm sure of what I'm feeling right now. If you want me."

For a split second longer she stood motionless. Then, somehow, she had caught at the front of his shirt and pulled him toward her. His arms went around her, lifting her almost out of her sandals, and then he was kissing her—or she was kissing him, she wasn't sure, and it didn't matter. The feel of his mouth on hers was electric; her hands gripped his arms, pulling him hard against her. The feel of his heart pounding through his shirt made her dizzy with joy. No one else's heart beat like Ben's did, or ever could.

He let her go at last and she gasped—she'd forgotten to breathe. He cupped her face between his hands, tracing the curve of her cheekbones with his fingers. The light was back in his eyes, as bright as it had been by the lake, but now there was a wicked sparkle to it. "There," he said. "That wasn't so bad, was it"

"I've had worse," she said, with a shaky laugh.

"You know," he said, bending to brush his mouth across hers, "if it's the lack of forbidden you're worried about, you could still forbid me to do things."

"What kinds of things?"

She felt him smile against her mouth. "Things like this."

"Nancy is a warlock," said Sonia, "although a very unusual kind of warlock. Remember what I told you, that I was panicked about how to put the spell on you that all Shadowhunters receive when they're born? The protection spell? And that a vampire and a female warlock stood in and helped with the ceremony? This is the warlock I was talking about. Nancy Harrington."

"You told me that was where you got the idea for the name Kaspbrak" Eddie sank down in the seat opposite Nancy, at the round table.

Nancy smiled, and her face lit up. "It was an honor."

"You were a baby; you wouldn't recall it," said Sonia, but Eddie thought of the way Nancy had looked familiar to him the first time he had seen him, and wondered.

"Why are you just telling me now?" Eddie demanded, looking up at his mother, who was standing by her chair, twisting her ring around her finger anxiously. "Why not before?"

"I had asked to be there when she told you, if she chose to," said Nancy; her voice was musical, soft and sweet, with the trace of an English accent. "And I fear I have long separated myself from the

Shadowhunter world. My memories of it are sweet and bitter, sometimes more bitter than sweet.”

Sonia dropped a kiss onto Eddie's head. “Why don't you two talk?” she said, and walked away, toward Jim, who was chatting with Neil.

Eddie looked at Nancy's smile, and said, “You're a warlock, but you're friends with a vampire. More than friends—that's a little odd, isn't it?”

Nancy leaned her elbows onto the table. A pearl bracelet gleamed around her left wrist; she touched it idly, as if through force of habit. “Everything about my life is quite out of the ordinary, but then, the same could be said for you, couldn't it?” Her eyes sparkled. “I Imagine Richard Tozier plays the piano very well.”

“And he knows it.”

“That sounds like a Wheeler.” Nancy laughed. “I must tell you, Eddie, that I learned only recently about Ben Byers. And I assume he is confused about his family. Denbroughs and Byers are honorable families, and both I have known, but my fate has always been most entwined with that of the Byers.” She said. “There are families—the Harringtons, the Byers, the Hendersons—for whom I have always felt a special affinity: I have watched over them from a distance, though I have learned not to interfere. That is in part why I retreated to the Spiral Labyrinth after the Uprising. It is a place so far from the world, so hidden, I thought I could find peace there from my knowledge of what had happened to the Byers. And then after the Mortal War I asked Jane if I should approach Ben, speak to him of the past of the Byers, but she said to give him time. That to bear the burden of the knowledge of the past was a heavy one. So I returned to the Labyrinth.” She swallowed. “This was a dark year, such a dark year for Shadowhunters, for Downworlders, for all of us. So much loss and grief.”

She looked toward the vampire with a light in her eyes. “But then, sometimes there are miracles. Steve told me all about you. He said it was ‘A story of Denbroughs and Byers and Hendersons.’” She glanced over at Steve, who was busy patting Mews. The cat had climbed up onto the champagne table and was gleefully knocking over glasses.

Her look was one of exasperation and fondness mixed together.

“Did Steve just pick up Mews?” Eddie stared in astonishment. Steve was holding the cat, who had gone boneless. “That cat hates everybody!”

Nancy gave a small smile. “I wouldn’t say everybody.”

She closed her eyes, and for a moment seemed to let the notes of the piano music wash over her.

“I have something for you,” she said, opening her eyes—they were gray, the color of rainwater. She slid something out of her pocket and held it out to Eddie. It was a dull silver circlet, a family ring, glimmering with the pattern of engraved birds in flight. “This ring belonged to Sophie Kaspbrak,” she said. “It is a true Kaspbrak ring, many years old. I was going to give it to your mother, but she said I should give it to you.”

Eddie took the ring; it just fit onto his thumb. “Thank you,” he said, “but this is a girl’s ring, isn’t it?”

Nancy smiled, then nodded. “Of course, but I’m pretty sure you can give it to some future Kaspbrak girl, don’t you think?”

Eddie blushed, and looked down at his hands. “T-thank you, Nancy.”

“I have something else,” She took up something that had been lying on the chair beside her, and held it out to Eddie. It was a copy of *The Shadowhunter’s Codex*, bound in blue velvet. “This is for you,” she said. “I am sure you have your own, but this was dear to me. There is an inscription on the back—see?” And she turned the book over, so that Eddie could see where words had been stamped in gold against the velvet.

“‘Freely we serve, because we freely love,’” Eddie read out, and looked up at Nancy. “Thank you; this is a lovely thing. Are you sure you want to give it away?”

Nancy smiled. “The Kaspbraks, too, have been dear to me in my life,” she said, “and your dark hair and your stubbornness recall to me people I once loved. Eddie,” she said, and leaned forward across the

table so that her jade pendant swung free, "I feel a kinship with you, too, you who have lost both brother and father. I know you have been judged and spoken of as the son of Robert Gray, and now the brother of Jonathan. There will always be those who want to tell you who you are based on your name or the blood in your veins. Do not let other people decide who you are. Decide for yourself. That freedom is not a gift; it is a birthright. I hope that you will use it."

"You sound so grave, Nancy. Don't frighten him." It was Steve, coming to stand behind Nancy's chair.

"I'm not!" Nancy said with a laugh; she had her head tipped back, and Eddie wondered if that was how he himself looked, looking up at Richie. He hoped so. It was a safe and happy look, the look of someone who was confident in the love they gave and received. "I was just giving him advice."

"Sounds terrifying." He also had laughter in his voice as he reached down and helped Nancy up out of her chair. "I'm afraid we must go; we have a long journey ahead of us."

"Where are you going?" Eddie asked, holding the Codex carefully on his lap.

"Hawkins," Nancy said. "I've always wanted to go there."

"It was good to meet you," Eddie said. "Thank you. For everything."

Nancy smiled radiantly and disappeared into the crowd, saying she was going to bid Sonia good-bye; Steve gathered up his coat and her wrap, Eddie watching him curiously. "Goodbye, Steve."

Steve smiled at him. "Take care. And tell Ben Byers he looks just like his great-great-great...-and so on-grandfather." he said.

Eddie laughed and nodded. "I'll tell him."

Steve smirked and vanished after Nancy.

"Has anyone seen Mews?" said a voice in his ear. It was Ben, his fingers tucked around Beverly's arm. Mike stood beside them, fiddling with a gold hat over his hair. "I think that vampire just stole our cat."

I swear I saw him putting Mews into the backseat of a car.”

“There’s no way,” said Richie, appearing beside Eddie. “Mews hates everyone.”

“Not everyone,” Eddie murmured with a smile. He looked up at Richie, licking his lips and Richie stared back at him.

“Hey guys,” Stan’s voice sounded behind Eddie, he turned around and was about to make a sarcastic comment about being late or whatever but when he saw Bill beside him, his jaw dropped. They were holding hands. Bill’s face was a dark tone of red and Stan, well, even if he was a vampire, he was flushing too.

“Whoa,” Beverly noticed it too. “How did *that* happen?”

Bill gave her a shy smile. “I f-followed your advice.”

Mike sighed. “I’ll pretend to be shocked.”

Eddie raised an eyebrow at Stan. “Look at you all blushy!” He pinched Stan’s cheeks which seemed to annoy him.

“Stop it! Dammit you’re so annoying sometimes.”

“So I’ve heard.”

Stan smirked at Beverly and Ben. “It seem like I’m not the only one enjoying the party, am I?”

Ben chuckled and grabbed Beverly’s hand too. “We’re just going to see how this goes.”

“Same here.” Stan squeezed Bill’s hand. Then he looked up at Richie and Eddie and raised his eyebrows.

“You’re here!” Max danced up to them in delight, carrying a glass of fuchsia liquid, which she thrust at Eddie. “Have some of this!”

Eddie squinted at it. “Is it going to turn me into a rodent?”

“Where is the trust? I think it’s strawberry juice,” Max said. “Anyway,

it's yummy. Richie?" She offered him the glass.

"I am a man," he told her, "and men do not consume pink beverages. Get thee gone, woman, and bring me something brown."

"Brown?" Max made a face.

"Brown is a manly color," said Richie's, and yanked on a stray lock of Max's hair with his free hand. "In fact, look—Bill is wearing it."

Bill looked mournfully down at his sweater. "It was black," he said. "But then it faded."

"You could dress it up with a sequined headband," Beverly suggested. "Just a thought."

"Resist the urge, Bill." Stan was now sitting on the edge of a low wall with Mike beside him.. "You'll look like Olivia Newton-John in Xanadu."

"There are worse things," Beverly observed.

Stan detached himself from the wall and came over to Ben and Beverly. With his hands in the back pockets of his jeans, he regarded them thoughtfully for a long moment. At last he spoke.

"You look happy," he said to her. He swiveled his gaze to Ben. "And a good thing for you that she does."

Ben raised an eyebrow. "Is this the part where you tell me that if I hurt her, you'll kill me?"

"No," said Stan. "If you hurt Beverly, she's quite capable of killing you herself. Possibly with a snap of her fingers."

Ben looked pleased by the thought.

"Guys," Beverly said. "Can we talk about the fact that if we all get married one day we will *all* be literally *related* to each other?"

"Please, don't jynx it." Richie said. Then he turned to Eddie. "Can we go for a walk?"

“A walk or a *walk*?” Beverly inquired. “Like, are you going to—”

“I think we should all go down to the lake,” Eddie said, standing up, the Codex in one hand and the ring in the other. “It’s beautiful down there. Especially at night. I’d like my friends to see it.”

He slid his hand into Richie’s as they all headed away from the tent, Beverly darting off to tell Mike to go fetch Lucas along as well. Eddie had wanted to be alone with Richie earlier; now he wanted to be with everyone.

He had loved Richie for what felt like a long time now, loved him so much that sometimes he felt like he might die from it, because it was something he needed and couldn’t have. But that was gone now: desperation replaced by peace and a quiet happiness. Now that he no longer felt that every moment with him was snatched from the possibility of disaster, now that he could imagine a whole lifetime of times with him that were peaceful or funny or casual or relaxed or kind, he wanted nothing more than to walk down to the farmhouse lake with all of his friends and celebrate the day.

As they passed down over the ridge onto the path to the lake, he glanced behind him. He saw Sonia and Jim standing by the tent, watching after them. He saw Jim smile at him and his mother raise her hand in a wave before lowering it to clasp her new partner’s. It had been the same for them, he thought, years of separation and sadness, and now they had a lifetime. *A lifetime of times*. Eddie raised his hand in an answering wave, and then hurried to catch up with his friends.

There were fireflies down by the lake. They illuminated the night with their winking flashes as the group spread out jackets and blankets, which Beverly produced from what she claimed was thin air, though Eddie suspected that they had been illegally summoned from Bed Bath & Beyond.

The lake was a silver dime, reflecting back the sky and all its thousands of stars. Eddie could hear Bill naming off the constellations to Stan: the Lion, the Bow, the Winged Horse. Mike reading a book,

somehow it amazed Eddie how he could be so calm. Max had kicked off her shoes and was walking barefoot along the lakeshore. Lucas had followed her, and as Eddie watched, he took her hand hesitantly.

She let him.

Ben and Beverly were leaning together, whispering. Every once in a while Beverly would laugh. Her face was brighter than it had been in months.

Richie sat down on one of the blankets and drew Eddie with him, his legs on either side of him. Eddie leaned his back against him, feeling the comforting beat of his heart against his own spine. His arms reached around his, and his fingers touched the Codex. "What's this?"

"A gift, from a friend." Eddie said.

We are all the pieces of what we remember. We hold in ourselves the hopes and fears of those who love us. As long as there is love and memory, there is no true loss.

Eddie wasn't sure of where he had heard those words, maybe it was in a dream, of the many he had. He turned around in his arms and kissed Richie on the cheek. He was beautiful under the night sky, the stars shedding their light down over him, gleaming against his hair and eyes and the Tozier ring shining on his finger, a reminder of everything that had been, and everything that would be.

"I love you," Eddie said, surprising himself, but not really, he knew this since the first kiss they shared, the first time he saw him at Pandemonium, at Java Jones, at the Institute, in the Dumort, in Pennywise's ship. All those moments that were building up to this one.

Eddie couldn't see him, but he knew Richie was smiling. "I love you too, Eds."

"Guys!" Beverly said. "Fireworks!"

"I don't see any fireworks," Eddie said, mock-scowling at Beverly.

"Patience, grasshopper," said Mike. "Good things come to those who

wait.”

“I always thought that was ‘Good things come to those who do the wave,’” said Stan. “No wonder I’ve been so confused all my life.”

“‘Confused’ is a nice word for it,” said Richie, but he was clearly only somewhat paying attention; he reached out and pulled Eddie toward him, almost absently, as if it were a reflex. Eddie looked up, nothing lit the heavens but the demon towers, glowing a soft silver-white against the darkness.

Eddie took out the ring Nancy gave him from his left pocket and held it in hands. “Nancy gave me this, too.” He said.

“I didn’t know you were into that stuff.” Richie said in a mocking tone.

“Not for me, you idiot,” Eddie smacked him in the arm, making Richie wince in amusement. “She said it was for a future Kaspbrak girl.”

Richie took the ring from Eddie’s hand and meticulously inspected it. “I think it fits better for a future *Tozier* girl, don’t you think?” He raised his eyebrows as Eddie blushed. Richie laughed as he stared at the ring. “Do you like the name *Tozier*?” Richie asked

“It’s your name, so I love it,” Eddie said.

“There are some pretty bad Shadowhunter names I could have ended up with,” he said. “Bloodstick. Ravenhaven.”

“Bloodstick can’t possibly be a name.”

“It may have fallen out of favor,” he acknowledged. “*Tozier*, on the other hand, is melodic. Dulcet, one might say. Think of the sound of ‘Eddie *Tozier*’”

“Oh, my God, that sounds *horrible*.”

“We all must sacrifice for love.” He grinned.

Eddie realized that was true. You couldn’t erase everything that

caused you pain with its recollection. He didn't want to forget Georgie or Rena, or Keene, or the Inquisitor, or even Henry. Every memory was valuable; even the bad ones. Pennywise had wanted to forget: to forget that the world had to change, and Shadowhunters had to change with it—to forget that Downworlders had souls, and all souls mattered to the fabric of the world. He had wanted to think only of what made Shadowhunters different from Downworlders. But what had been his undoing had been the way in which they were all the same.

“Eddie,” Richie said, breaking him out of his reverie. He tightened his arms around him, and Eddie raised his head; their friends were cheering as the first of the rockets went up. “Look.”

Eddie looked as the fireworks exploded in a shower of sparks—sparks that painted the clouds overhead as they fell, one by one, in streaking lines of golden fire, like angels falling from the sky.

Notes for the Chapter:

Guys. I can't believe it, I feel so sad right now. A fic that started out of boredom a February 15th night, became something really precious to me. I cannot express all of my feelings but I would say it has been an amazing ride.

I hope you have liked this as much as I did, maybe giving you a smile after a long, tiring day. I'll never forget it guys.

You know, I was planning on writing more books of this, but I think three is more than enough, I don't want to stretch it out, so I kinda ended it on a high note.

And I know the couples were all rushed in the end, but as Eddie said, it's all about taking risks, and just living life. And who knows, maybe one day I'll come back to write short stories about these characters. I'm not promising anything.

Again, thank you so much <33333

I'm not good with farewells, but...Goodbye. And long
live Reddie, Stenbrough and Benverly <3333